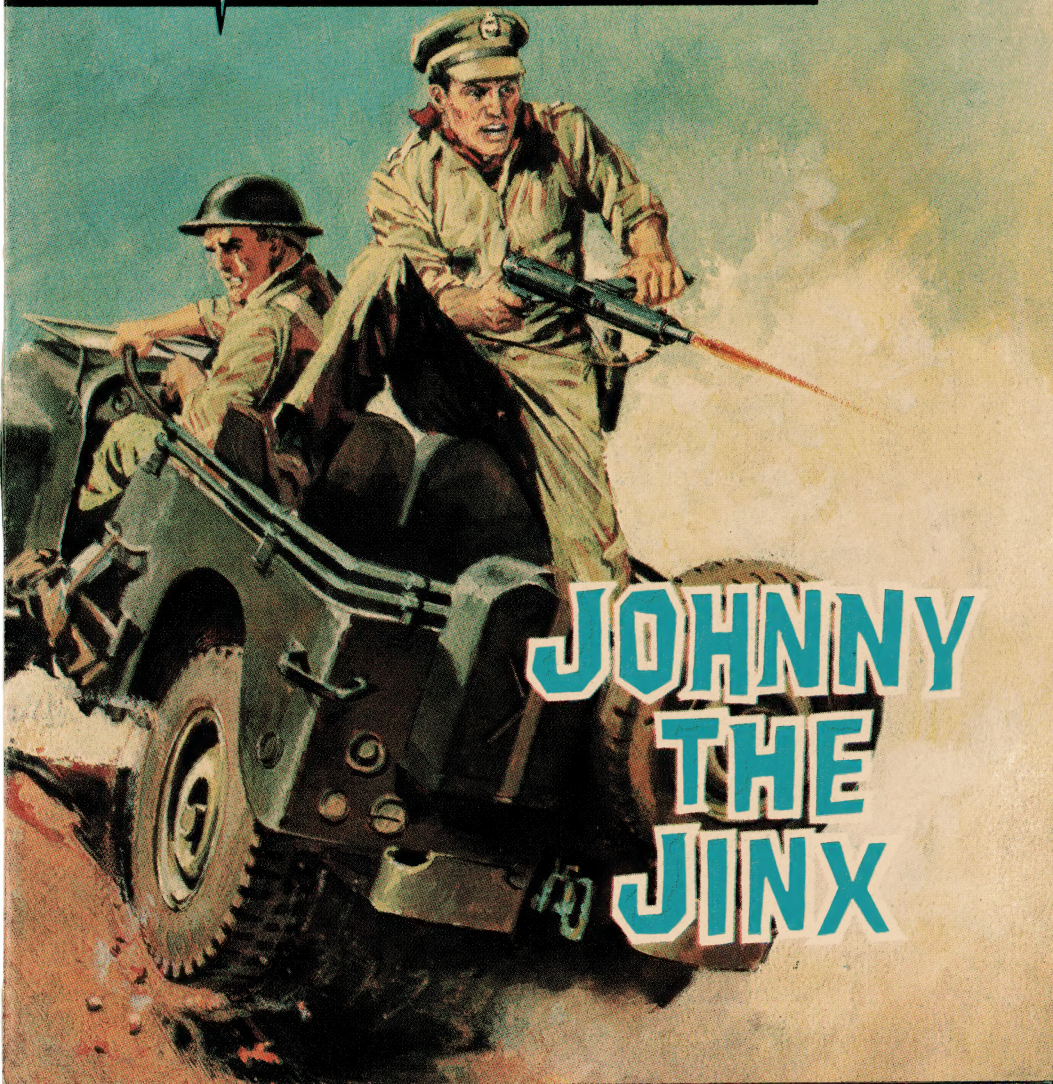
No. 1019
8p
AUS. 30c N.Z. 31c

Commando

WAR STORIES IN PICTURES



JOHNNY THE JINX

FIGHTING SQUADRONS of the R.A.F.

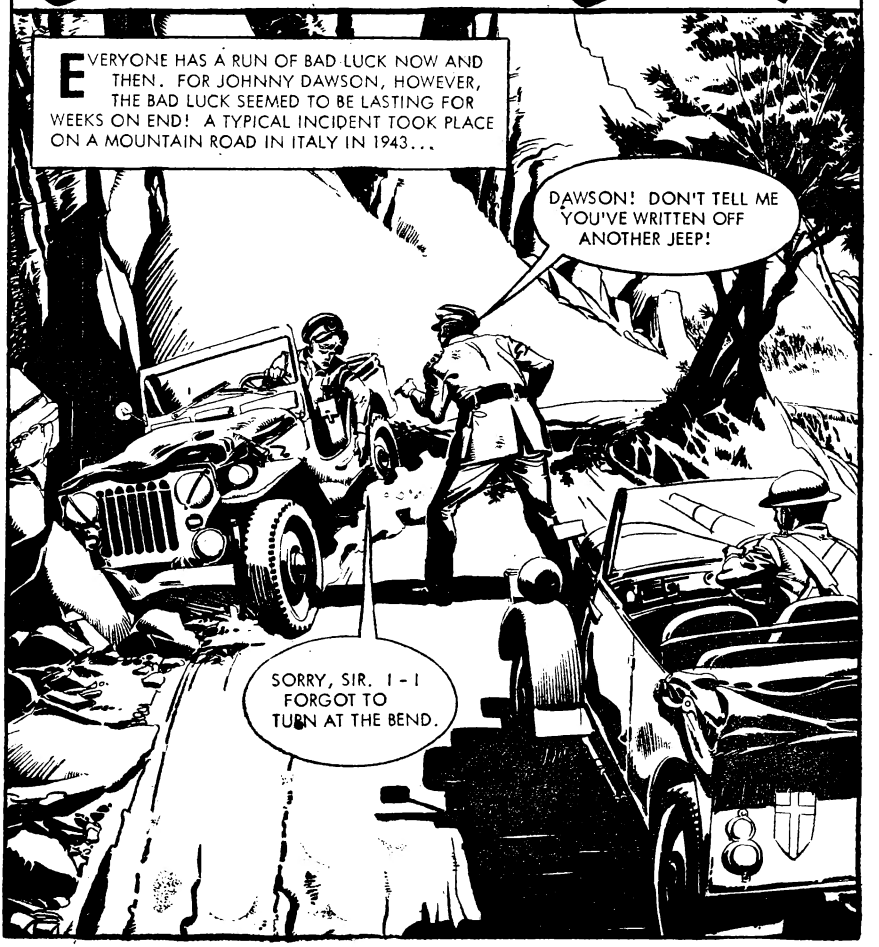
39 SQUADRON

THE badge is a winged bomb, yet 39 Squadron gained its first fame in action against bombers. Mind you, these bombers weren't planes, they were Zeppelin airships. In the early hours of Sunday, September 3, 1916, Lieutenant W. Leefe Robinson chased and brought down the first Zeppelin to land on British soil. The flaming wreckage of airship SL11 finally crashed near Cuffley, in Hertfordshire, and Robinson himself landed, according to the newspapers of the day, with only half a pint of petrol left in the tank of his B.E.2c!

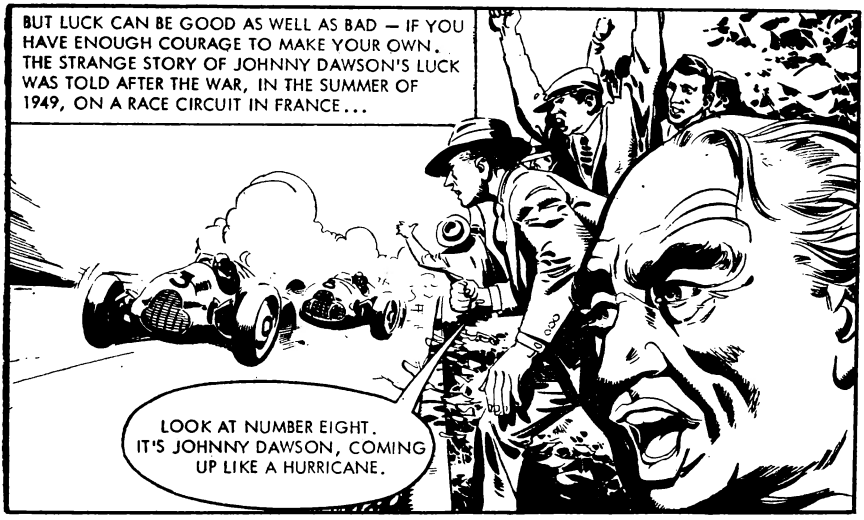
For this epic deed he was awarded the Victoria Cross — but the Squadron wasn't finished yet. Before the end of the month its pilots had downed another three Zepps, making 39 the crack Home Defence outfit of the time.

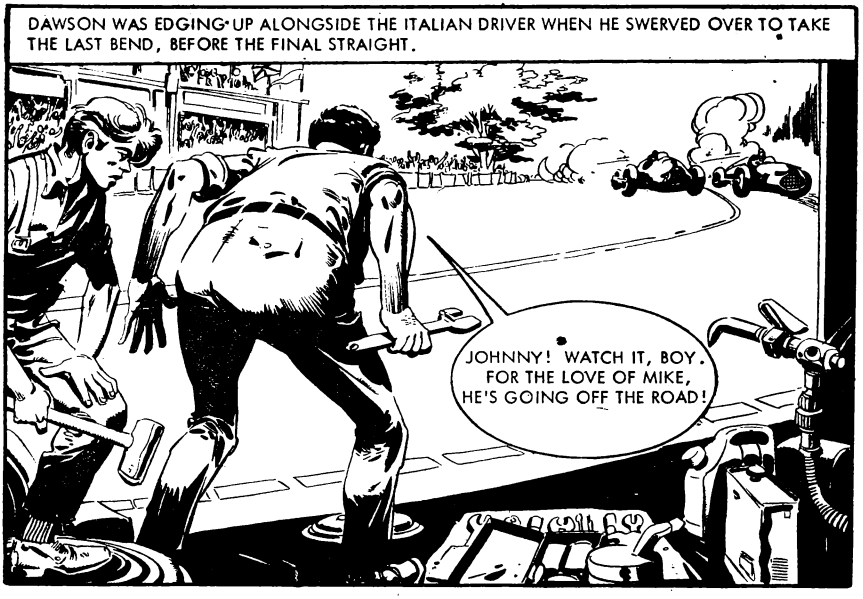
In World War II the Squadron's career continued with bombing and torpedo-bombing in the Mediterranean area in a succession of different types — Blenheims, Beauforts, Beaufighters, Marauders. Since then the squadron has flown Tempests, Meteors and Canberras — but Leefe Robinson and his B.E.2c will never be forgotten.

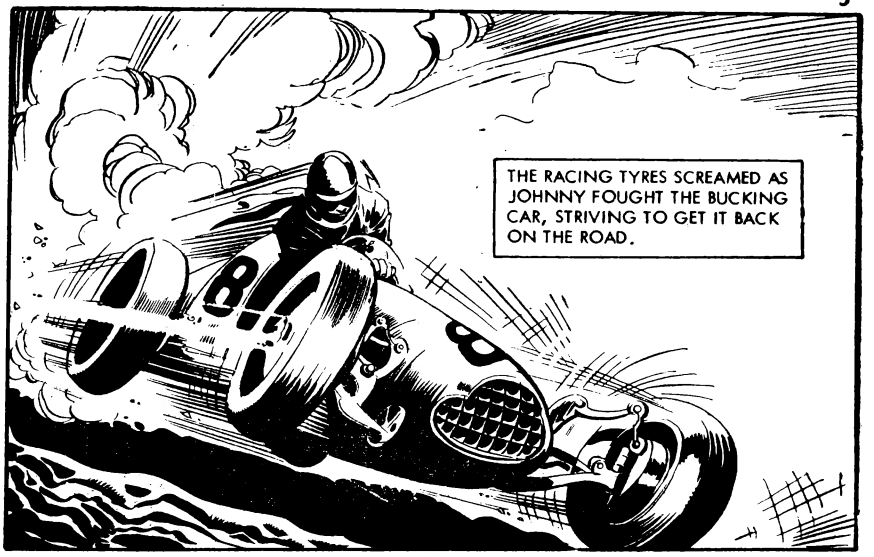
JOHNNY THE JINX


EVERYONE HAS A RUN OF BAD LUCK NOW AND THEN. FOR JOHNNY DAWSON, HOWEVER, THE BAD LUCK SEEMED TO BE LASTING FOR WEEKS ON END! A TYPICAL INCIDENT TOOK PLACE ON A MOUNTAIN ROAD IN ITALY IN 1943...
DAWSON! DON'T TELL ME YOU'VE WRITTEN OFF ANOTHER JEEP!
SORRY, SIR. I - I FORGOT TO TURN AT THE BEND.

First published 1967


BUT LUCK CAN BE GOOD AS WELL AS BAD — IF YOU HAVE ENOUGH COURAGE TO MAKE YOUR OWN. THE STRANGE STORY OF JOHNNY DAWSON'S LUCK WAS TOLD AFTER THE WAR, IN THE SUMMER OF 1949, ON A RACE CIRCUIT IN FRANCE...
LOOK AT NUMBER EIGHT. IT'S JOHNNY DAWSON, COMING UP LIKE A HURRICANE.


DAWSON WAS EDGING UP ALONGSIDE THE ITALIAN DRIVER WHEN HE SWERVED OVER TO TAKE THE LAST BEND, BEFORE THE FINAL STRAIGHT.
JOHNNY! WATCH IT, BOY. FOR THE LOVE OF MIKE, HE'S GOING OFF THE ROAD!


THE RACING TYRES SCREAMED AS JOHNNY FOUGHT THE BUCKING CAR, STRIVING TO GET IT BACK ON THE ROAD.
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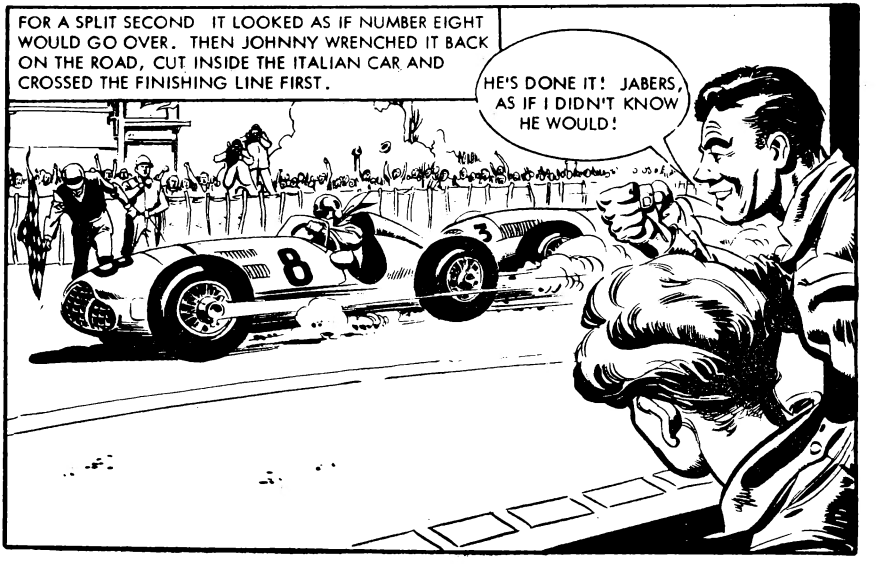

FOR A SPLIT SECOND IT LOOKED AS IF NUMBER EIGHT WOULD GO OVER. THEN JOHNNY WRENCHED IT BACK ON THE ROAD, CUT INSIDE THE ITALIAN CAR AND CROSSED THE FINISHING LINE FIRST.
HE'S DONE IT! JABERS, AS IF I DIDN'T KNOW HE WOULD!
8
3

AS THE TRIUMPHANT DRIVER WAS CARRIED AWAY BY DELIGHTED SUPPORTERS, PADDY O'HARA, CHIEF MECHANIC, TOOK OVER THE CAR. JIMMY LEWIS, ONE OF HIS TEAM, HELPED HIM.
BY GOLLY, HE WAS LUCKY. NO WONDER THEY TALK OF "DAWSON'S LUCK."
8
LISTEN TO ME, LADDIE, CAPTAIN JOHNNY DAWSON NEEDS ALL THE LUCK HE CAN GET. AND BESIDES HE'S A FINE DRIVER.

HE'S A FINE DRIVER ALL RIGHT, BUT WHY DOES HE ALWAYS CARRY THIS ON HIS DASHBOARD?

TAKE YOUR FINGERS OFF THAT, JIMMY LEWIS. THAT'S THE CAPTAIN'S TALISMAN. ONE OF THESE DAYS I'LL TELL YOU ALL ABOUT IT. NOW LET'S GET THIS CRATE READY FOR HOME.

THAT NIGHT AFTER THE CAR HAD BEEN PUT AWAY, A CELEBRATION WAS HELD AT THE CLUBHOUSE
AREN'T YOU COMING UP FOR A DRINK, THEN, PADDY?
IN A MOMENT. I JUST WANT TO RELAX FOR A BIT AFTER OUR HECTIC DAY.
YEAH, IT'S BEEN SOME DAY. WE'VE BEEN LUCKY, ALL RIGHT.
LUCKY? WELL, I SUPPOSE YOU COULD SAY THAT. BUT JOHNNY WASN'T ALWAYS LUCKY. IN FACT IT WAS JUST THE OPPOSITE WHEN I FIRST KNEW HIM.
'WAY BACK IN 1943, IN ITALY, I WAS POSTED TO THE THIRD BATTALION OF MY INFANTRY MOB. I WAS A DRIVER, SEE, AND NOT A BAD ONE AT THAT.

PADDY TALKED ON, LETTING HIS MIND GO BACK TO THE WAR DAYS, WHEN JOHNNY DAWSON WAS JUST A SECOND LIEUTENANT.

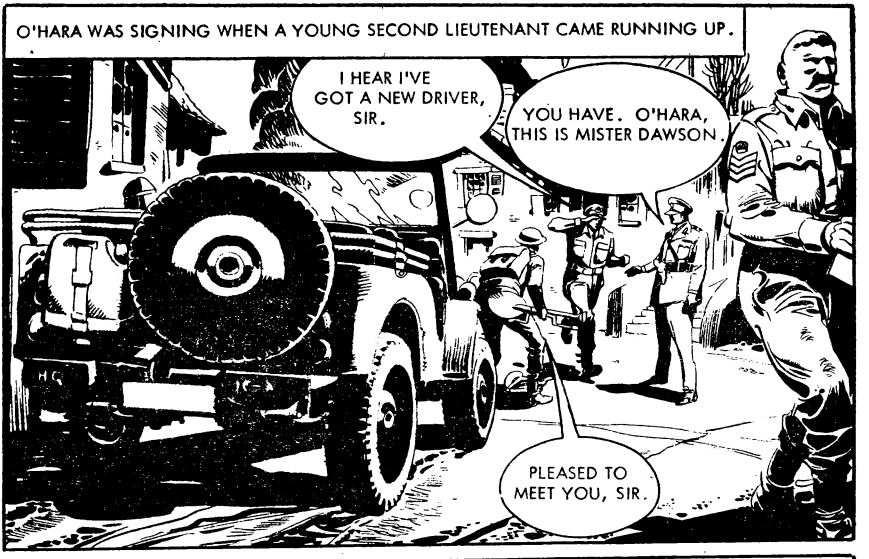
YOU SAY YOU'RE DAWSON'S NEW DRIVER? THEN THE BEST OF LUCK TO YOU, MATE. THAT BLOKE IS DUE TO BREAK HIS NECK ANY TIME NOW. BY THE WAY, THE QUARTERMASTER SERGEANT WANTS TO SEE YOU.

PADDY SOON FOUND THE QUARTERMASTER SERGEANT, AND THE C.O. HIMSELF, LIEUTENANT COLONEL CRAIG, WATCHED PADDY TAKE OVER A BATTERED JEEP.

SIGN HERE, O'HARA. ALL THE TOOLS ARE THERE AND THE VEHICLE IS IN RUNNING ORDER.

KEEP IT THAT WAY, O'HARA.

YES, SIR.

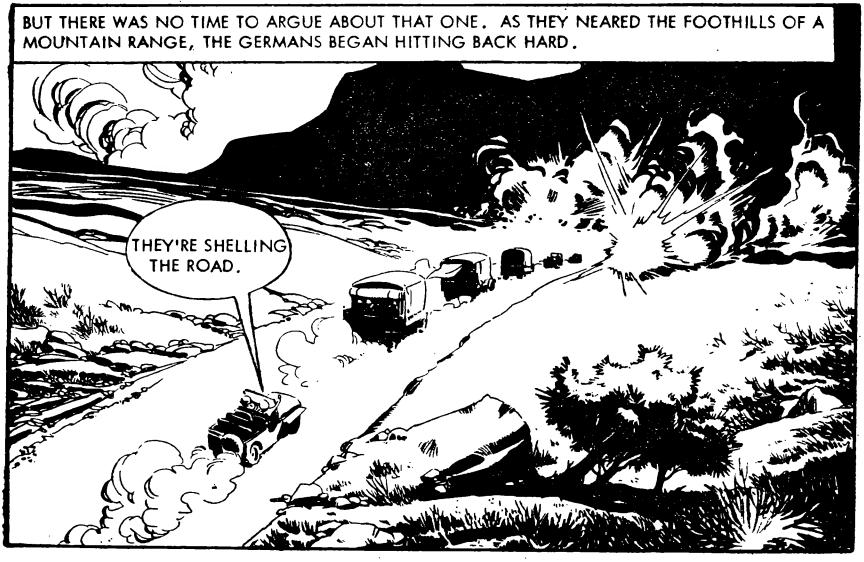

O'HARA WAS SIGNING WHEN A YOUNG SECOND LIEUTENANT CAME RUNNING UP.
I HEAR I'VE GOT A NEW DRIVER, SIR.
YOU HAVE. O'HARA, THIS IS MISTER DAWSON.
PLEASED TO MEET YOU, SIR.

CRAIG'S PRESENCE WAS QUICKLY EXPLAINED.
I'M HERE TO TELL YOU THAT O'HARA IS TO DRIVE ALL THE TIME, DAWSON. YOU'VE ALREADY WRITTEN OFF TWO JEEPS.

JOHNNY DAWSON SOUNDED ALMOST PLAINTIVE.
BUT SIR -
NO BUTS, DAWSON. JUST DO AS I SAY - OR NEXT TIME I'LL HAVE YOU COURT-MARTIALLED.
PADDY O'HARA COULDN'T HELP OVERHEARING.
WHAT WAS THAT ALL ABOUT, SIR?
I GUESS HE'S RIGHT. I'VE SMASHED UP TWO JEEPS SO FAR. BEFORE THE WAR I WAS A RACING DRIVER, BUT I'VE GOT SOME JINX CHASING ME. WELL, YOU HEARD THE C.O., O'HARA. THE JEEP IS ALL YOURS.

THE NEXT FEW DAYS WERE HECTIC AS THE BATTALION MOVED NORTH, AFTER THE RETREATING GERMANS. PADDY HAD TAKEN A STRONG DISLIKE TO CORPORAL "BUSTER" REGAN, THE COMPANY BIG-MOUTH.
HEY, O'HARA! I SEE YOU'RE STILL LIVING. BUT YOU'RE ON BORROWED TIME, BELIEVE ME.
JOHNNY APPEARED FROM UNDER THE VEHICLE.
WHAT WAS ALL THAT ABOUT, O'HARA?
OH, JUST THAT BIG CLOT CORPORAL REGAN TRYING TO BE FUNNY. HE'S MAKING OUT YOU'RE A LOAD OF BAD LUCK.

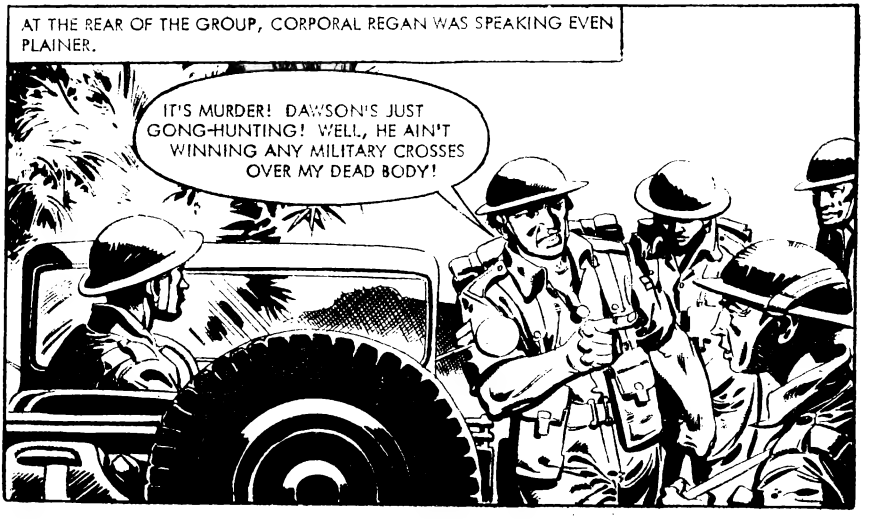
AS THEY DROVE ON, JOHNNY WAS SILENT FOR A LONG TIME. THEN -
HE'S RIGHT, YOU KNOW. I'VE GOT GREMLINS AFTER ME.
GREMLINS, SIR? DON'T BELIEVE IN THEM. TIME YOU FORGOT 'EM AS WELL.


BUT THERE WAS NO TIME TO ARGUE ABOUT THAT ONE. AS THEY NEARED THE FOOTHILLS OF A MOUNTAIN RANGE, THE GERMANS BEGAN HITTING BACK HARD.
THEY'RE SHELLING THE ROAD.

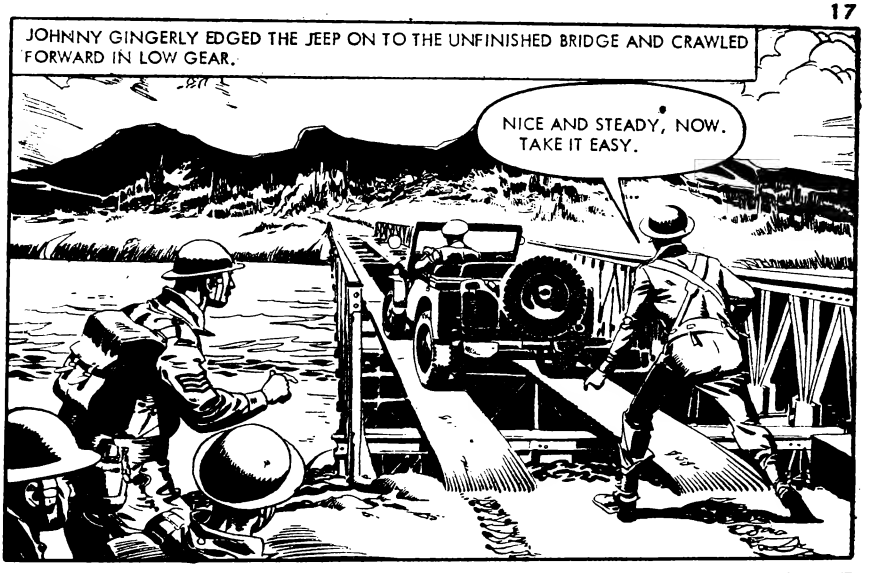
AHEAD, CRAIG FLAGGED THEM DOWN.
DAWSON, THEY'VE GOT A BATTERY UP AHEAD SOMEWHERE. TAKE YOUR PLATOON, WITH BAZOOKAS, AND ATTACK THEM FROM THE FLANK.
YOU'LL HAVE TO CROSS THE SAMOGGIA RIVER. CANADIAN SAPPERS ARE BRIDGING IT DOWNSTREAM. GET ACROSS AS SOON AS YOU CAN.
WITH HIS PLATOON BEHIND IN A TRUCK, JOHNNY HEADED FOR THE BRIDGE.
FASTER, O'HARA, FASTER.
STEADY ON, SIR. WE'LL BE SHAKEN TO PIECES.

WHEN THEY REACHED THE BAILEY BRIDGE, BAD NEWS AWAITED THEM.
A COUPLE OF HOURS YET BEFORE IT'LL BE READY.
BUT WE'VE GOT TO GET ON! THE WHOLE COLUMN IS HELD UP. IT LOOKS OK TO ME.
LOOK, BUDDY, I'M THE GUY WHO SAYS WHEN IT'S OK OR NOT. THOSE PLANKS ARE FOR WALKING ON. BUT THE BRIDGE AIN'T READY FOR HEAVY TRANSPORT.
I'LL TAKE THE CHANCE, SIR. AND I'LL SIGN A CHIT CLEARING YOU - JUST IN CASE OF ACCIDENTS.
YOU BET YOUR LIFE YOU WILL.

SERGEANT JIM THOMAS, THE PLATOON SERGEANT, LOOKED WORRIED. WITH JOHNNY'S UNLUCKY REPUTATION, ANYTHING COULD HAPPEN.
AREN'T WE STICKING OUR NECKS OUT, SIR? IF THE SAPPERS SAY THE BRIDGE ISN'T FINISHED, THEY SHOULD KNOW.
SERGEANT, WE'VE BEEN GIVEN A JOB TO DO, SO LET'S GET ON WITH IT.
JUST SIGN HERE, YOUNGSTER. THAT CLEARS ME FROM A POSSIBLE CHARGE OF HOMICIDE!


AT THE REAR OF THE GROUP, CORPORAL REGAN WAS SPEAKING EVEN PLAINER.
IT'S MURDER! DAWSON'S JUST GONG-HUNTING! WELL, HE AIN'T WINNING ANY MILITARY CROSSES OVER MY DEAD BODY!

O'HARA THOUGHT IT WAS ABOUT TIME HE HAD HIS SAY.
WHAT'S THE MATTER, CORPORAL? GETTING COLD FEET?
KEEP YOUR BIG TRAP SHUT, O'HARA, OR I'LL WRAP THAT JEEP ROUND YOUR NECK.
ALL I'M SCARED OF IS DAWSON'S BAD LUCK. AND THAT REALLY SCARES ME.
OH, GROW UP, REGAN. ONLY KIDS ARE SCARED OF NOTHING AT ALL.
JOHNNY PUT PAID TO THE ARGUMENT.
RIGHT, I'LL TAKE THE JEEP ACROSS FIRST. YOU FOLLOW, O'HARA, DRIVING THE THREE-TONNER. THE MEN CAN WALK.


JOHNNY GINGERLY EDGED THE JEEP ON TO THE UNFINISHED BRIDGE AND CRAWLED FORWARD IN LOW GEAR.
NICE AND STEADY, NOW. TAKE IT EASY.

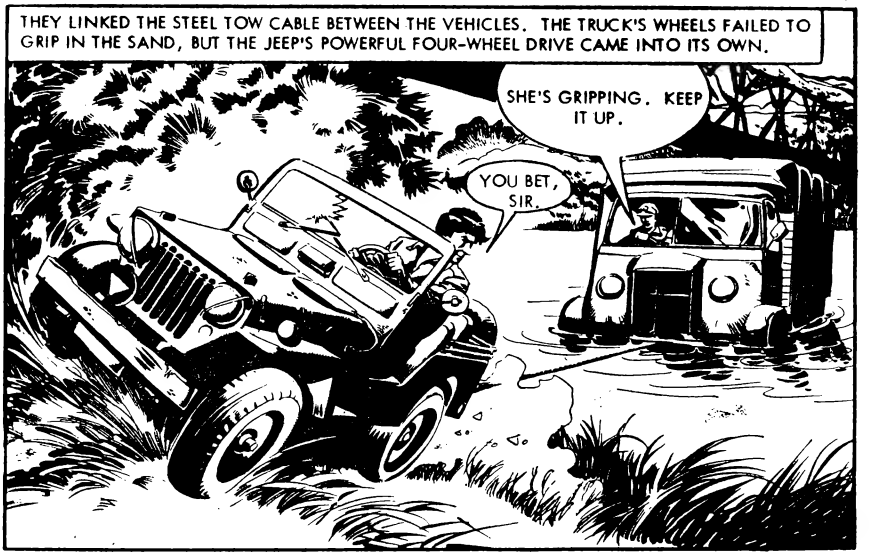
JOHNNY BREATHED A PRAYER OF RELIEF AS THE JEEP REACHED SOLID GROUND ON THE FAR SIDE. THEN PADDY O'HARA CLIMBED INTO THE CAB OF THE EMPTY TRUCK.
HERE GOES. WISH ME LUCK!
OK. WE'LL FOLLOW WHEN YOU'RE ACROSS.

O'HARA WAS ALMOST ACROSS WHEN THERE WAS A GRINDING CRASH AND THE BOTTOM FELL OUT OF THE BRIDGE.

THE TRUCK DROPPED STRAIGHT, LANDING ON ITS WHEELS WITH A HUGE SPLASH. BUT O'HARA HAD BEEN HURLED OUT -

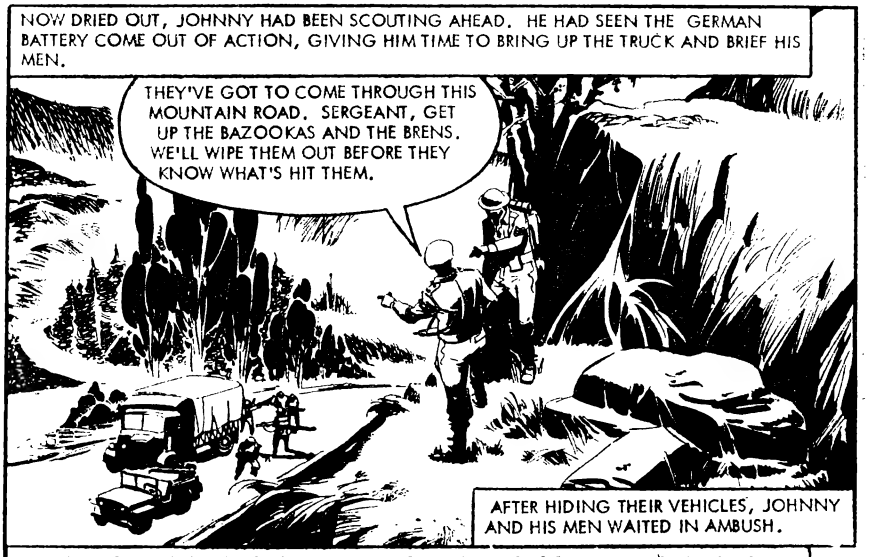
JOHNNY WADED IN, WAIST DEEP, GRABBING AT O'HARA'S COLLAR AS HE WENT DOWN FOR THE SECOND TIME.
HOLD IT, PADDY. YOU AREN'T DROWNED YET.
THE IRISHMAN HAD ALREADY COME ROUND WHEN DAWSON DRAGGED HIM UP THE BANK.
THANKS, SIR. YOU SAVED MY LIFE.
I'M SORRY. I SHOULD NEVER HAVE LET YOU RISK IT. NOW I'VE WRITTEN OFF ANOTHER TRUCK, AND IT'LL BE CURTAINS FOR ME WHEN WE GET BACK.

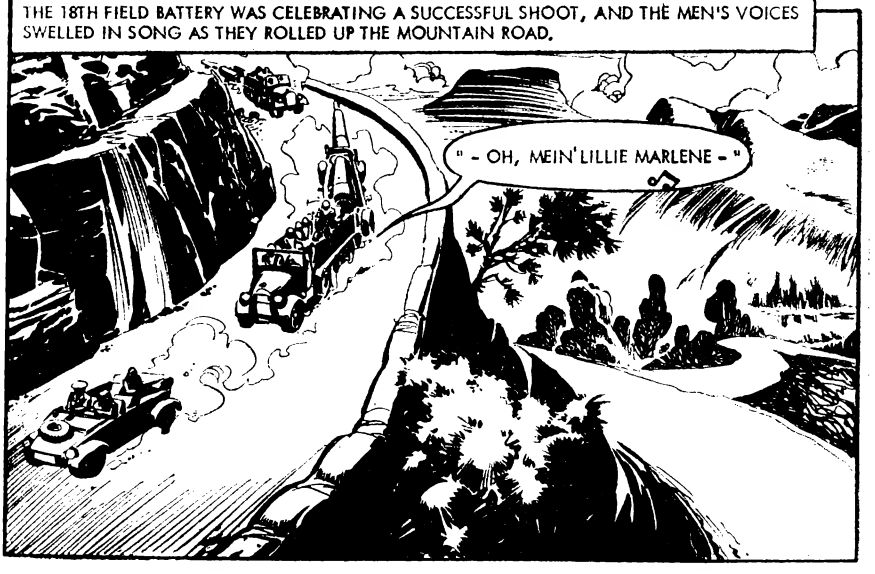
O'HARA HEARD REGAN MOANING TO THE SERGEANT.
LET'S GET BACK, SERGEANT, BEFORE SOMETHING WORSE HAPPENS. THE THREE-TONNER IS FINISHED.
PIPE DOWN, CORPORAL! THAT TRUCK ISN'T DAMAGED. IT'S ONLY WET. WE CAN GET IT OUT. THE ENGINE'S BEEN WATERPROOFED.
BUT JOHNNY SEEMED TO HAVE GIVEN UP, UNTIL PADDY O'HARA JERKED HIM BACK TO REALITY.
DO YOU HEAR ME, SIR? THE TRUCK IS WATERPROOFED. WE CAN DRIVE IT UP THE BANK WITH SOME HELP FROM THE JEEP.
WHAT? BY JOVE, I THINK YOU'RE RIGHT! GET THE TOW ROPE OUT.


THEY LINKED THE STEEL TOW CABLE BETWEEN THE VEHICLES. THE TRUCK'S WHEELS FAILED TO GRIP IN THE SAND, BUT THE JEEP'S POWERFUL FOUR-WHEEL DRIVE CAME INTO ITS OWN.
SHE'S GRIPPING. KEEP IT UP.
YOU BET, SIR.

THE TRUCK CAME OUT WET AND DRIPPING — BUT GOING. THE GREMLINS WERE BEING LICKED.
WE'RE ON OUR WAY AGAIN, CORPORAL. DOESN'T THAT MAKE YOU HAPPY?
GET LOST!

AT ABOUT THAT MOMENT, A CERTAIN GERMAN ARTILLERY OFFICER WAS FEELING HE HAD HAD A GOOD DAY. HE DECIDED NOT TO PRESS HIS LUCK.
CEASE FIRE. PREPARE TO MOVE OUT.
JAWOHL, HERR HAUPTMANN.
THE GUN-TOWING HALF-TRACKS ROLLED UP FROM THE WAGON-LINES. EFFICIENTLY THE GUNS WERE BROUGHT OUT OF ACTION AND INTO COLUMN. CAPTAIN KLAUS LANDMEYER LED HIS UNIT OUT—TO TRAVEL NORTH, HEADING FOR THE GOTHIC LINE.
FORWARD!


NOW DRIED OUT, JOHNNY HAD BEEN SCOUTING AHEAD. HE HAD SEEN THE GERMAN BATTERY COME OUT OF ACTION, GIVING HIM TIME TO BRING UP THE TRUCK AND BRIEF HIS MEN.
THEY'VE GOT TO COME THROUGH THIS MOUNTAIN ROAD. SERGEANT, GET UP THE BAZOOKAS AND THE BRENS. WE'LL WIPE THEM OUT BEFORE THEY KNOW WHAT'S HIT THEM.
AFTER HIDING THEIR VEHICLES, JOHNNY AND HIS MEN WAITED IN AMBUSH.


THE 18TH FIELD BATTERY WAS CELEBRATING A SUCCESSFUL SHOOT, AND THE MEN'S VOICES SWELLED IN SONG AS THEY ROLLED UP THE MOUNTAIN ROAD.
" - OH, MEIN' LILLIE MARLENE - "

JOHNNY WAITED UNTIL HE HAD EVERY GUN, EVERY VEHICLE, EVERY MAN COMPLETELY WITHIN RANGE. THEN —

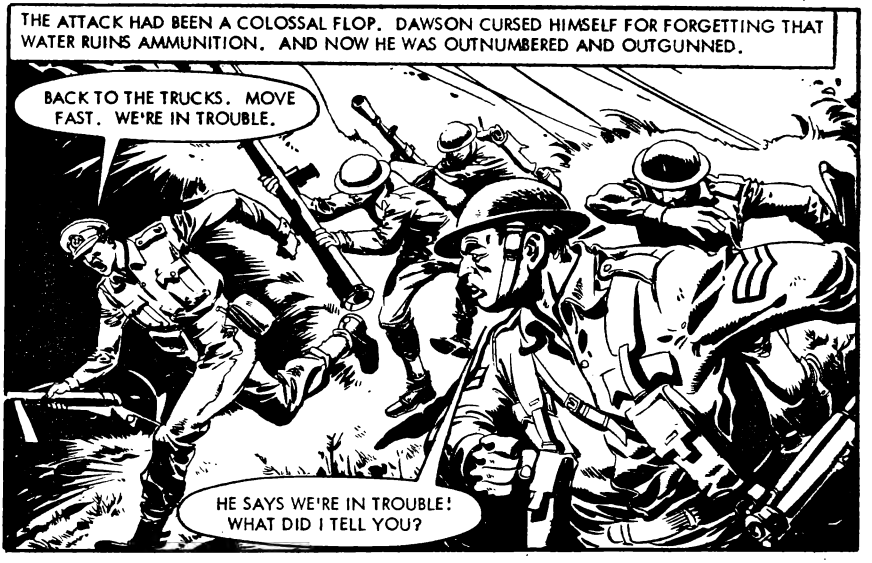
OPEN FIRE! LET 'EM HAVE IT!

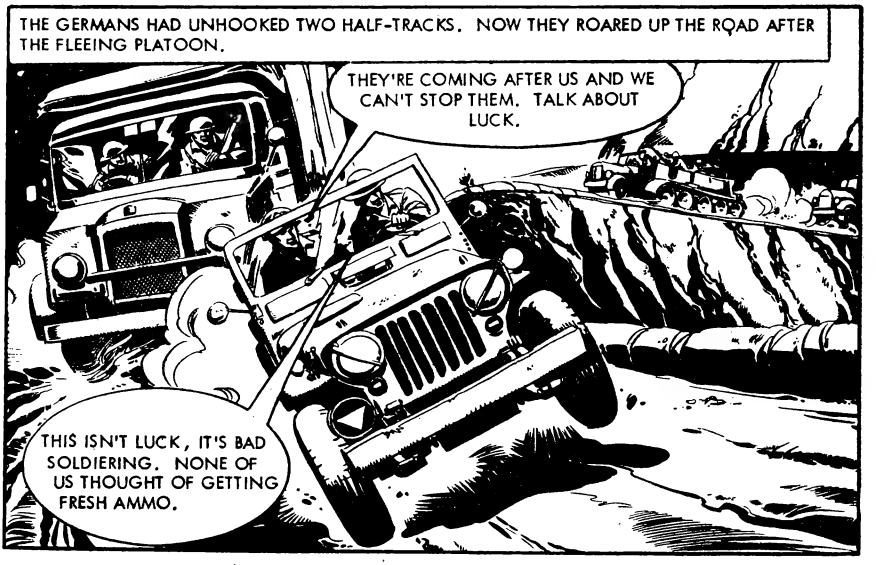
BUT NOTHING HAPPENED! THE GUNS REMAINED SILENT.

MISTER DAWSON, THE WATER'S GOT INTO THE AMMO. THE GUNS WON'T FIRE.

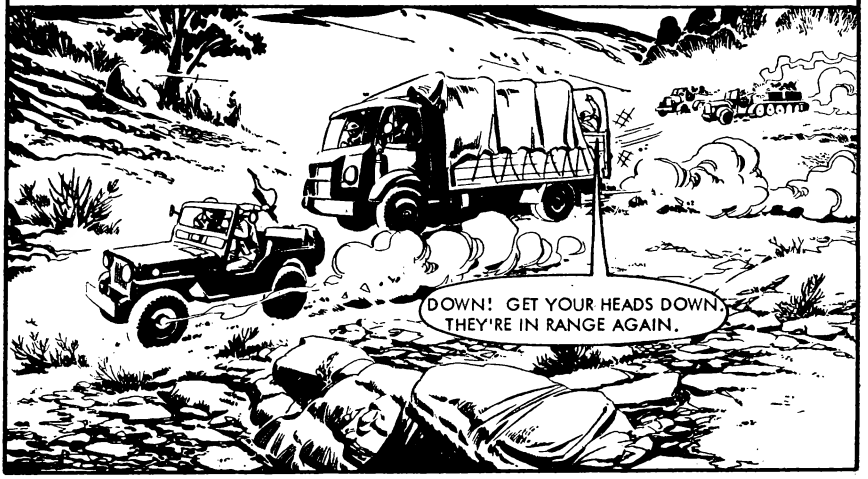
THE HAUPTMANN HAD RECOVERED FAST FROM HIS SURPRISE.

ACHTUNG! ENGLANDERS. BRING THE MACHINE-GUNS INTO ACTION, SCHNELL!

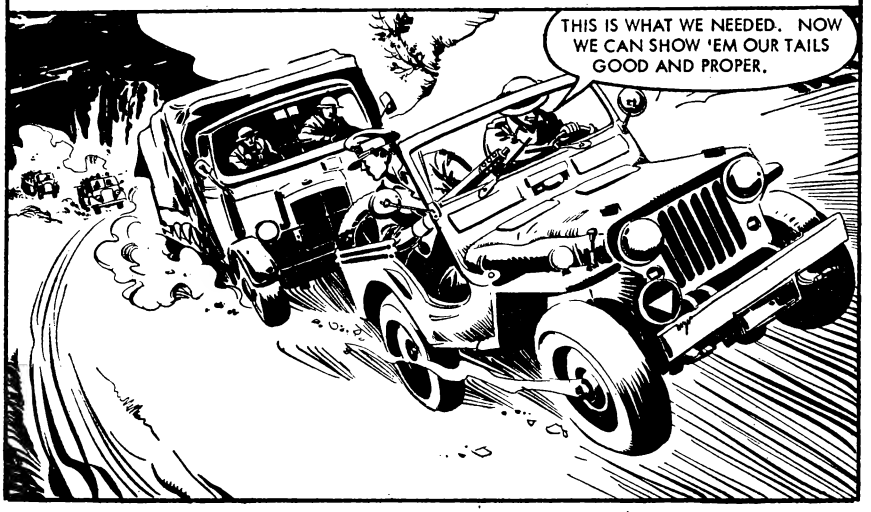

THE ATTACK HAD BEEN A COLOSSAL FLOP. DAWSON CURSED HIMSELF FOR FORGETTING THAT WATER RUINS AMMUNITION. AND NOW HE WAS OUTNUMBERED AND OUTGUNNED.
BACK TO THE TRUCKS. MOVE FAST. WE'RE IN TROUBLE.
HE SAYS WE'RE IN TROUBLE! WHAT DID I TELL YOU?


THE GERMANS HAD UNHOOKED TWO HALF-TRACKS. NOW THEY ROARED UP THE ROAD AFTER THE FLEEING PLATOON.
THEY'RE COMING AFTER US AND WE CAN'T STOP THEM. TALK ABOUT LUCK.
THIS ISN'T LUCK, IT'S BAD SOLDIERING. NONE OF US THOUGHT OF GETTING FRESH AMMO.

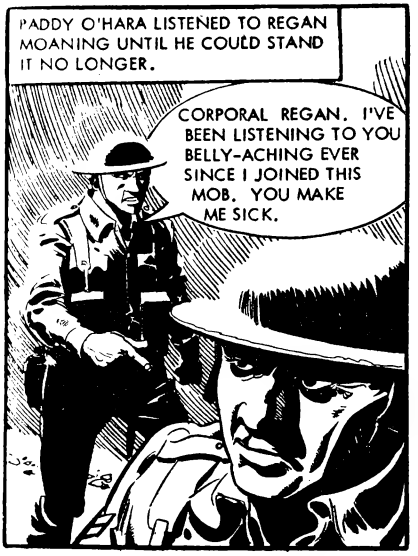
FOR THE NEXT THIRTY MINUTES IT WAS A RACE AGAINST DISASTER. PADDY BOUNCED THE JEEP ACROSS COUNTRY, FOLLOWED BY THE TRUCK, BUT THE HALF-TRACKS SEVERAL TIMES GOT WITHIN RANGE.



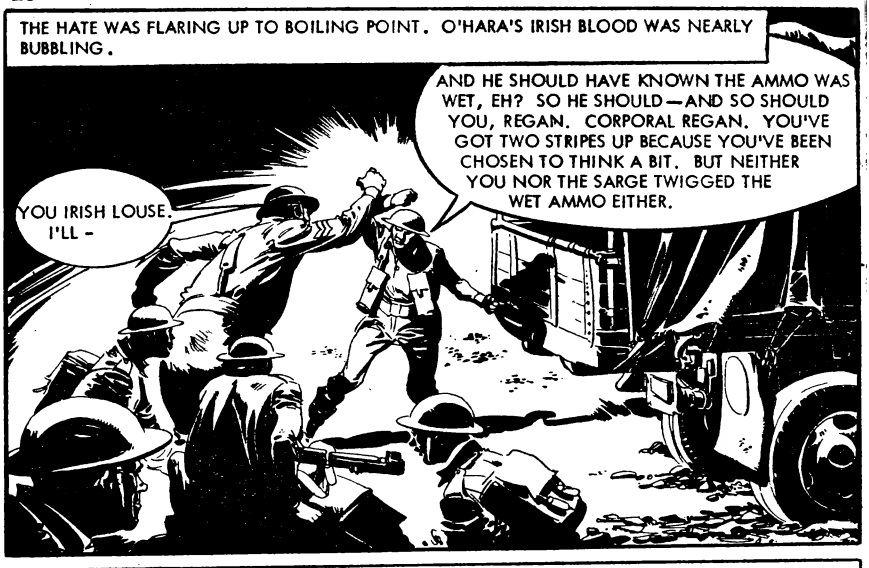
THERE WAS NO TIME TO KEEP DIRECTION. WHEN THEY REACHED A REASONABLY GOOD ROAD, O'HARA PUT HIS FOOT DOWN.



THE PLATOON WAS VERY GLOOMY WHEN IT HALTED AT DUSK, MILES FROM ANYWHERE, IN WHAT COULD HAVE BEEN ENEMY COUNTRY.
NOW WE CLEAN THE WEAPONS! AND WE'RE STUCK OUT ON A LIMB, ALL BECAUSE OF JONAH THERE. LOOK AT HIM—EVERYTHING HE DOES GOES WRONG.


PADDY O'HARA LISTENED TO REGAN MOANING UNTIL HE COULD STAND IT NO LONGER.
CORPORAL REGAN. I'VE BEEN LISTENING TO YOU BELLY-ACHING EVER SINCE I JOINED THIS MOB. YOU MAKE ME SICK.

SO I MAKE YOU SICK, DO I? JUST BECAUSE HE PULLED YOU OUT OF THE RIVER, YOU'RE DAWSON'S MAN NOW, AREN'T YOU? BUT DON'T FORGET HE PUT YOU IN THE RIVER TO START WITH!


THE HATE WAS FLARING UP TO BOILING POINT. O'HARA'S IRISH BLOOD WAS NEARLY BUBBLING.
AND HE SHOULD HAVE KNOWN THE AMMO WAS WET, EH? SO HE SHOULD—AND SO SHOULD YOU, REGAN. CORPORAL REGAN. YOU'VE GOT TWO STRIPES UP BECAUSE YOU'VE BEEN CHOSEN TO THINK A BIT. BUT NEITHER YOU NOR THE SARGE TWIGGED THE WET AMMO EITHER.
YOU IRISH LOUSE. I'LL -

REGAN HAD PICKED THE WRONG MAN. PADDY O'HARA HAD BEEN RAISED IN A TOUGH SCHOOL WHERE A MAN LEARNED QUICKLY TO TAKE CARE OF HIMSELF.
SO YOU FANCY A FIGHT? COME ON, THEN.
UGH!

AS FISTS FOUND FLESH IN THUDDING BLOWS, PADDY HEARD THE OTHER MEN SHOUTING FOR REGAN.
GO TO IT, CORP! SHOW HIM WHERE HE GETS OFF.
HE'S AN OFFICER'S MAN, THAT. SMASH HIM, CORP.
SERGEANT THOMAS GOT BETWEEN THEM AND MANAGED TO BREAK UP THE FIGHT.
STOP THIS BRAWLING REGAN, YOU COULD LOSE YOUR STRIPES FOR THIS. O'HARA, I'VE A GOOD MIND TO CHARGE YOU WITH STRIKING AN N.C.O.
I HIT HIM FIRST, SARGE. LEAVE THE RAT TO ME.

SLOWLY, PADDY O'HARA WALKED AWAY. HE WAS MARKED AS AN "OFFICER'S MAN".

STUPID CLOTS! THEY'VE GOT IT FIXED IN THEIR HEADS THAT DAWSON'S UNLUCKY AND NOTHING WILL SHIFT IT.

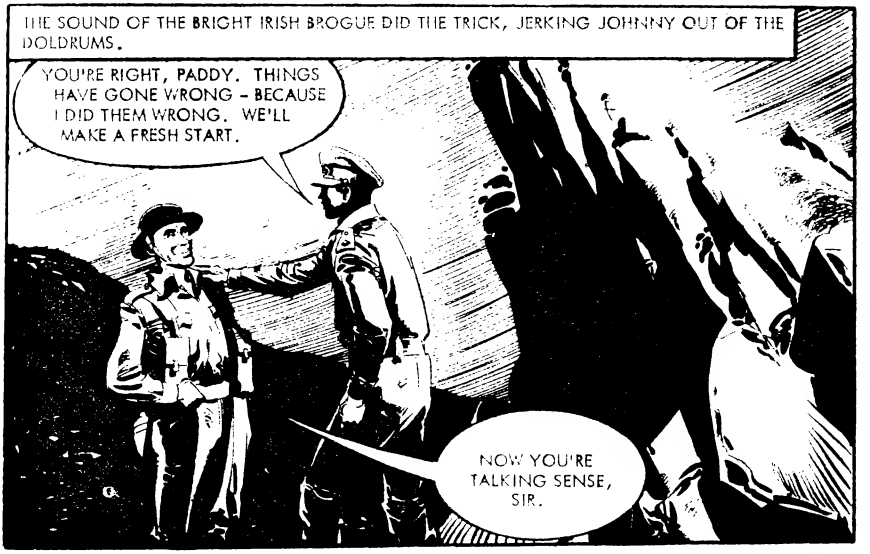
HE FOUND JOHNNY DEEP IN THOUGHT:

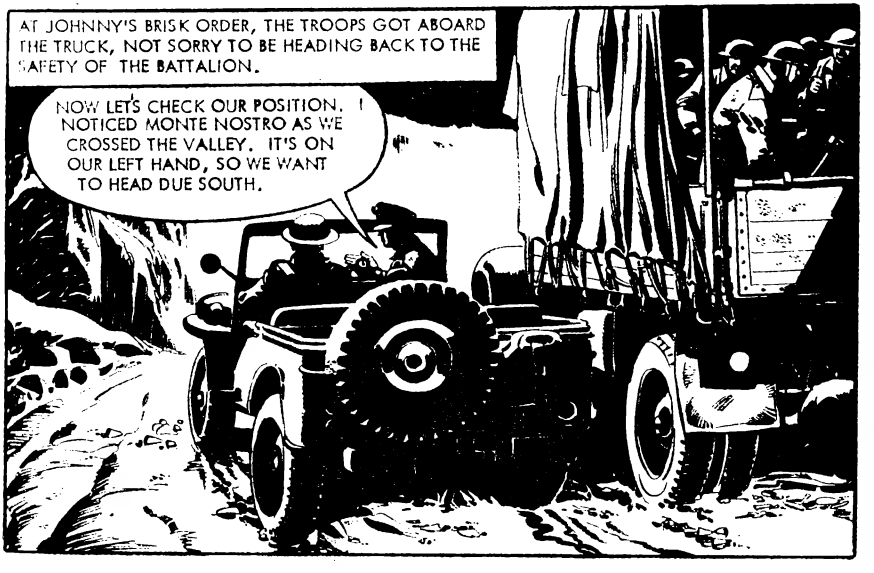
AREN'T YOU GOING TO EAT, SIR?

NO. THE MEN ARE RIGHT, YOU KNOW... THERE DOES SEEM TO BE A JINX ON ME.

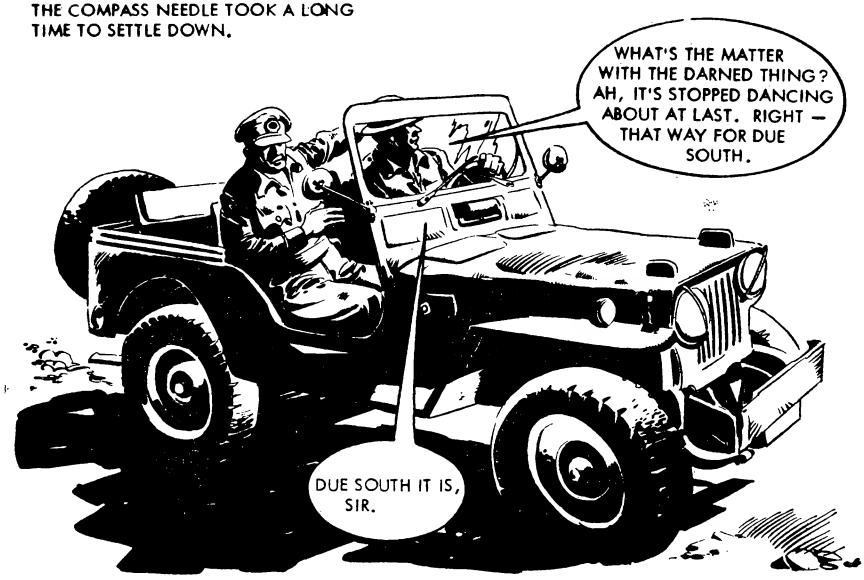
PADDY TRIED SHOCK TACTICS. HE WAS OLDER THAN JOHNNY DAWSON—AND HE FELT A HUNDRED YEARS WISER.

COME OFF IT, SIR. I'M THE IRISHMAN, I'M THE BLOKE WHO'S SUPPOSED TO SEE LEPRECHAUNS AND LITTLE MEN IN TOP HATS AND LONG NOSES WHO PUT THE EVIL EYE ON A FELLER. WELL, THE ONLY LITTLE MEN I CAN SEE RIGHT NOW ARE THAT GANG BY THE TRUCK. SO SNAP OUT OF IT!

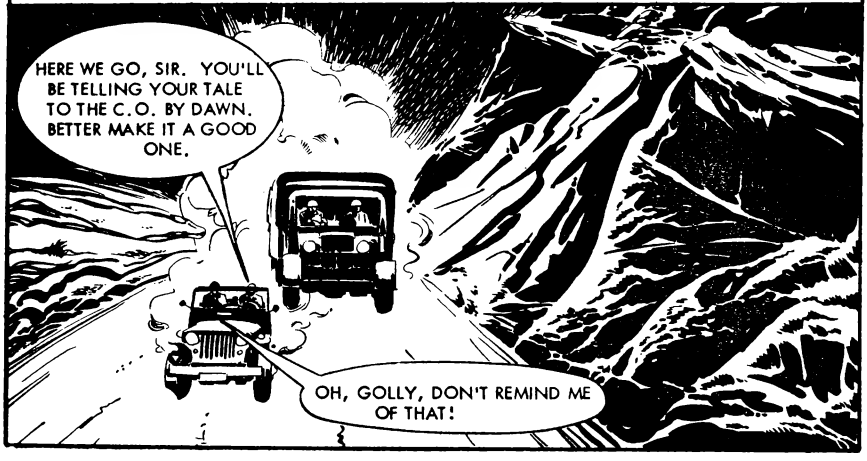

THE SOUND OF THE BRIGHT IRISH BROGUE DID THE TRICK, JERKING JOHNNY OUT OF THE DOLDRUMS.
YOU'RE RIGHT, PADDY. THINGS HAVE GONE WRONG - BECAUSE I DID THEM WRONG. WE'LL MAKE A FRESH START.
NOW YOU'RE TALKING SENSE, SIR.


AT JOHNNY'S BRISK ORDER, THE TROOPS GOT ABOARD THE TRUCK, NOT SORRY TO BE HEADING BACK TO THE SAFETY OF THE BATTALION.
NOW LET'S CHECK OUR POSITION. I NOTICED MONTE NOSTRO AS WE CROSSED THE VALLEY. IT'S ON OUR LEFT HAND, SO WE WANT TO HEAD DUE SOUTH.

THE COMPASS NEEDLE TOOK A LONG TIME TO SETTLE DOWN.


WHAT'S THE MATTER WITH THE DARNED THING? AH, IT'S STOPPED DANCING ABOUT AT LAST. RIGHT — THAT WAY FOR DUE SOUTH.
DUE SOUTH IT IS, SIR.

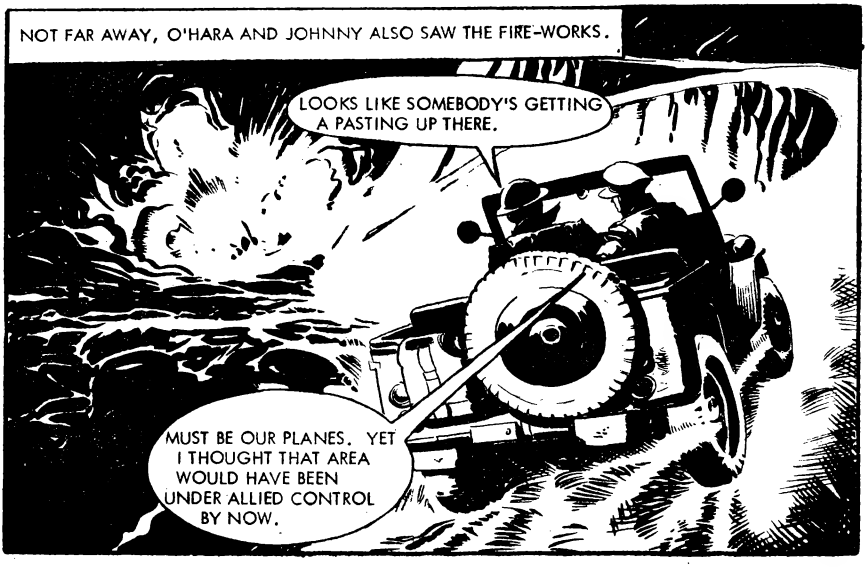
WHAT JOHNNY DID NOT KNOW WAS THAT THE MOUNTAINS WERE FULL OF IRON-BEARING ROCK. AND THE IRON ACTED STRANGELY ON THE COMPASS. THEY WERE NOW TRAVELLING EAST.



THAT NIGHT, AMERICAN FORTRESSES LAUNCHED AN ATTACK ON THE MOUNTAIN VILLAGE OF CASTIGLIONE. THE ITALIANS HAD EVACUATED IT AND THE GERMANS WERE HOLDING IT TO COVER THE RICCI VALLEY.
THERE'S CASTIGLIONE. WE GOTTA PINPOINT IT, AND STEER CLEAR OF THE DAM. IF WE BURST THAT DAM, THE GENERAL WILL SURE BLOW HIS TOP!

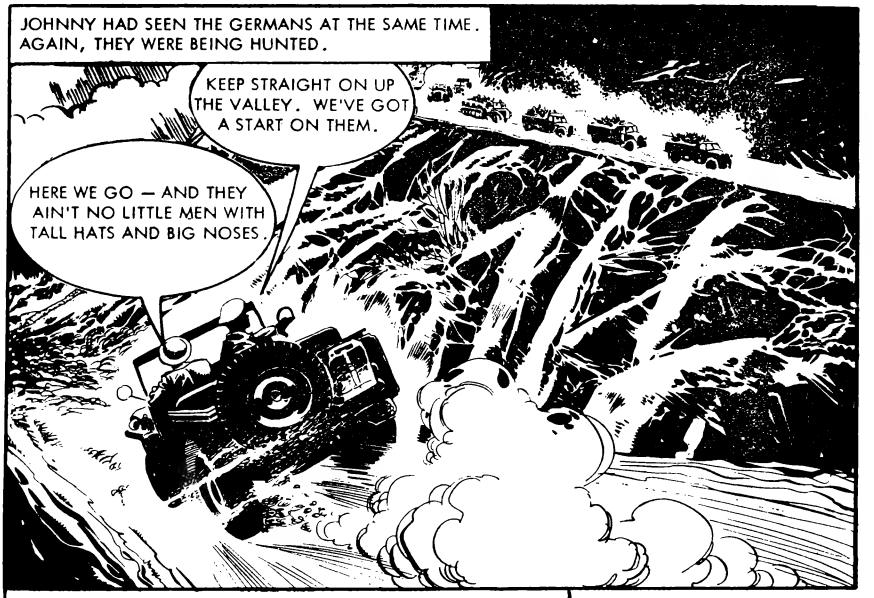
THE ENEMY WAS ALREADY PULLING OUT IN PANIC AS THE GREAT BIRDS WINGED THEIR WAY OVER THE MOUNTAINS.
GET THAT TANK OUT OF THE WAY, YOU'RE BLOCKING THE ROAD.

THE BOMBS BEGAN TO RAIN DOWN ON THE VILLAGE. BUT BY NOW THE GERMANS WERE ALMOST CLEAR.
THEY ARE WIPING OUT CASTIGLIONE ALL RIGHT. AND THEY THINK THEY ARE WIPING OUT US AS WELL. THE FOOLS!


NOT FAR AWAY, O'HARA AND JOHNNY ALSO SAW THE FIRE-WORKS.
LOOKS LIKE SOMEBODY'S GETTING A PASTING UP THERE.
MUST BE OUR PLANES. YET I THOUGHT THAT AREA WOULD HAVE BEEN UNDER ALLIED CONTROL BY NOW.

THEN, AHEAD THEY SPOTTED A WAYSIDE SHRINE, TYPICAL OF MANY IN ITALY. JOHNNY TOLD PADDY TO PULL UP BESIDE IT.
PULL UP HERE, O'HARA. THESE SHRINES SOMETIMES GIVE THE NAMES OF THE NEAREST VILLAGE. I CAN CHECK OUR POSITION.
THE NAME WAS THERE, AND WHEN JOHNNY CHECKED IT AGAINST HIS MAP, HIS HEART JUMPED. THEY WERE MILES OFF COURSE.
MONTONE? I CAN HARDLY BELIEVE IT. THAT'S MILES EAST OF WHERE WE OUGHT TO BE.
SUFFERING SNAKES! NOW HE CAN'T EVEN READ A COMPASS.

WE'VE GONE WRONG SOMEWHERE, O'HARA. WE'RE IN GERMAN-HELD TERRITORY HERE.
I JUST KEPT GOING THE WAY YOU SAID. NO GOOD MOANING, THOUGH. WHAT'S THE RIGHT WAY HOME?
I DON'T KNOW. I HONESTLY DON'T KNOW. WE'RE OUT ON A LIMB AND YOUR GUESS IS AS GOOD AS MINE.
OK, I'LL FLIP FOR IT. HEADS TO THE RIGHT, TAILS TO THE LEFT.
THE COIN CAME DOWN TAILS — AND IT LED THEM STRAIGHT INTO THE GERMANS EVACUATING CASTIGLIONE.
HALT! IT IS THE BRITISH!


JOHNNY HAD SEEN THE GERMANS AT THE SAME TIME. AGAIN, THEY WERE BEING HUNTED.
KEEP STRAIGHT ON UP THE VALLEY. WE'VE GOT A START ON THEM.
HERE WE GO — AND THEY AIN'T NO LITTLE MEN WITH TALL HATS AND BIG NOSES.

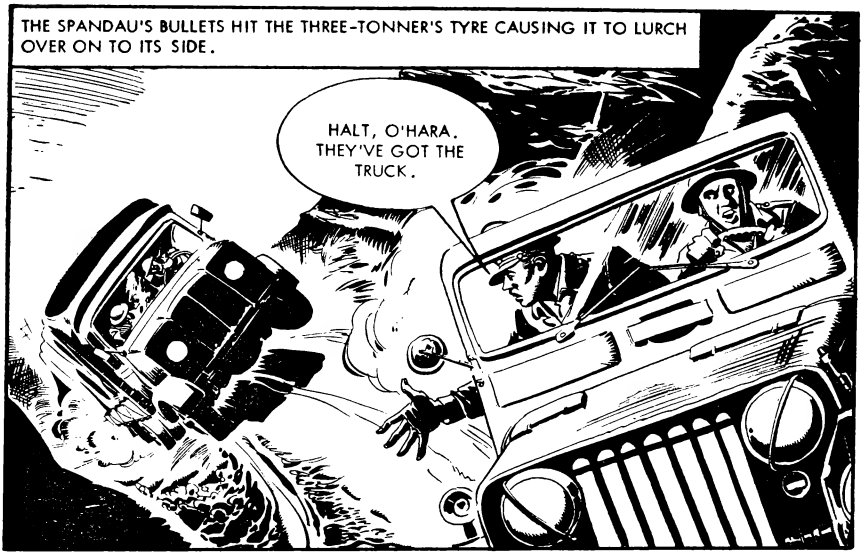
LEUTNANT SCHMIDT WAS DETAILED TO TACKLE THE INTRUDERS.
THEY MAY BE THE ADVANCE PARTY OF A BRIGADE. GET THEM BEFORE THEY CAN GET BACK TO REPORT. TAKE A HALF-TRACK AND AN OPEN TRUCK.
JAWOHL, HERR OBERST.

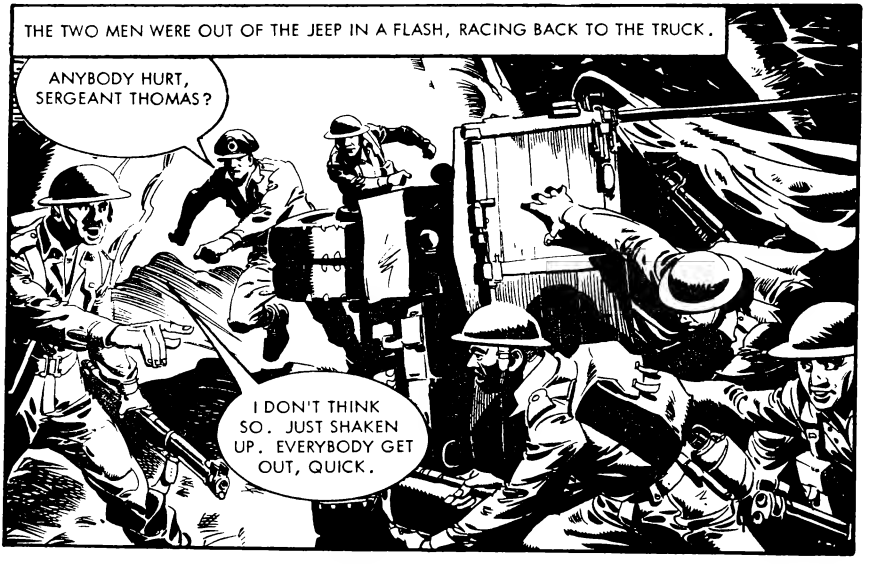
THE ROAD PETERED OUT INTO A ROUGH TRACK, SLOWING THEM DOWN.
STEP ON IT, FOR PETE'S SAKE, O'HARA.
I DON'T WANT TO LOSE THE THREE-TONNER, SIR. IT'LL BE SHAKING TO BITS AS IT IS.
THE HEAVIER, STURDIER GERMAN VEHICLES HAD MADE BETTER TIME. NOW, SCHMIDT WAS SWINGING INTO ACTION.
GET THEM BEFORE THEY CAN GET OUT OF THE VALLEY.

FEUER!

THEY SAW NOTHING UNTIL TRACER BULLETS STARTED WHIPPING PAST THEM. THE GERMANS WERE OVERSHOOTING.
JABERS! WHAT'S THAT?
A SPANDAU, PROBABLY. KEEP YOUR FINGERS CROSSED AND STEP ON IT.

RANGING FROM A MOVING BASE ON A MOVING TARGET WAS DIFFICULT, BUT SCHMIDT KEPT TRYING.
KEEP FIRING!

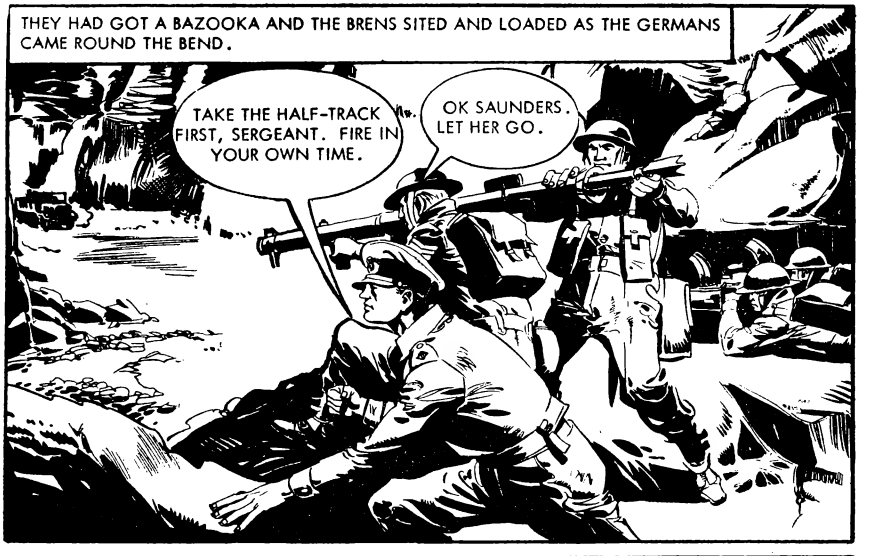

THE SPANDAU'S BULLETS HIT THE THREE-TONNER'S TYRE CAUSING IT TO LURCH OVER ON TO ITS SIDE.
HALT, O'HARA. THEY'VE GOT THE TRUCK.

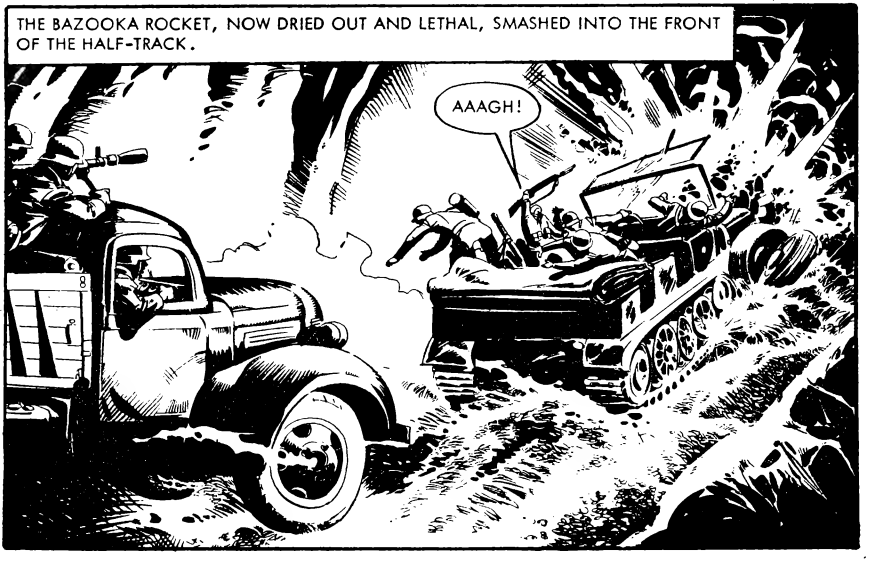

THE TWO MEN WERE OUT OF THE JEEP IN A FLASH, RACING BACK TO THE TRUCK.
ANYBODY HURT, SERGEANT THOMAS?
I DON'T THINK SO. JUST SHAKEN UP. EVERYBODY GET OUT, QUICK.

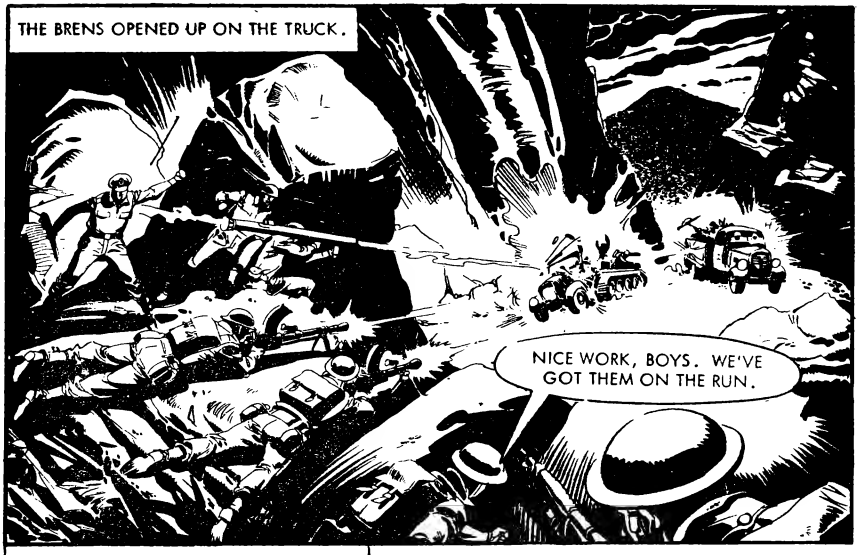
JOHNNY'S BRAIN WAS TICKING OVER FAST. PEOPLE MIGHT CALL HIM UNLUCKY, BUT THEY COULD NOT DENY HE WAS A FIGHTER.
CROWD ON TO THE JEEP. BUT BRING THE BRENS AND BAZOOKAS IF YOU CAN. WE HAVEN'T MUCH TIME.
YOU HEARD. GET ON THE JEEP.
WITH ALL EIGHT MEN ON THE JEEP, IT WAS REALLY LOADED.
ALL ABOARD? THEN LET'S GO!

THEY MANAGED TO GET INTO THE GORGE AT THE END OF THE VALLEY, BUT THEY KNEW THE GERMANS WERE GETTING VERY CLOSE NOW.
HEAD FOR THE FAR CLIFF THERE. WE CAN GET BEHIND THE ROCKS AND TRY TO DEFEND OURSELVES.

THE GREAT BOULDERS IN THE GORGE STOOD OUT, OFFERING SOME PROTECTION.
HALT HERE. EVERYBODY OFF. GET THE JEEP BEHIND THE BOULDERS, O'HARA. SERGEANT, SET UP THE BRENS AND BAZOOKAS.


THEY HAD GOT A BAZOOKA AND THE BRENS SITED AND LOADED AS THE GERMANS CAME ROUND THE BEND.
TAKE THE HALF-TRACK FIRST, SERGEANT. FIRE IN YOUR OWN TIME.
OK SAUNDERS. LET HER GO.

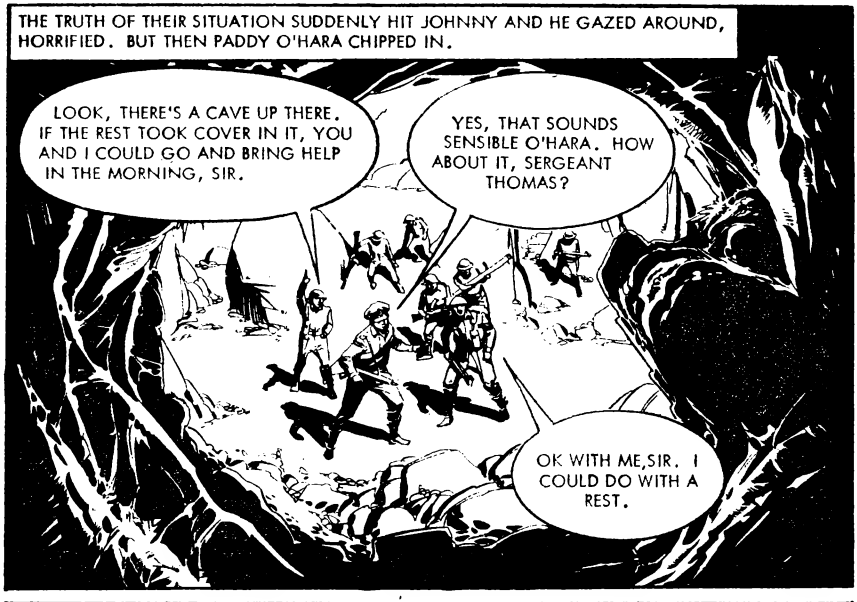

THE BAZOOKA ROCKET, NOW DRIED OUT AND LETHAL, SMASHED INTO THE FRONT OF THE HALF-TRACK.
AAAGH!

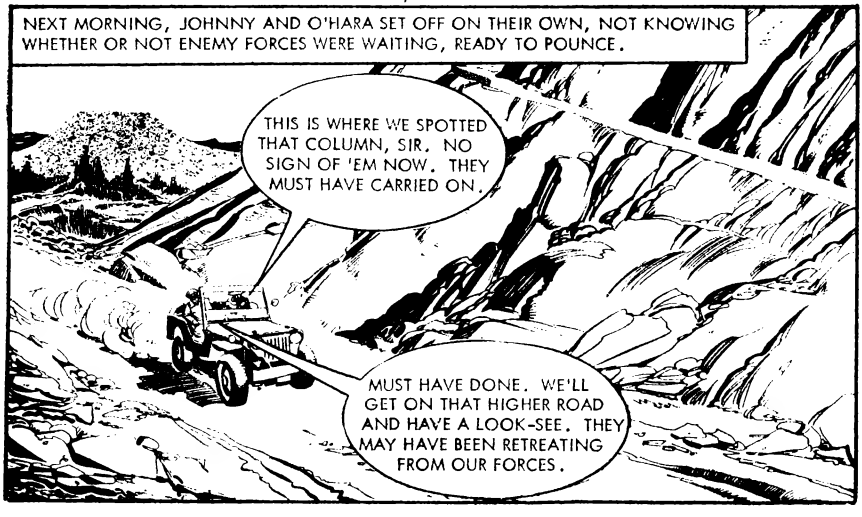

THE BRENS OPENED UP ON THE TRUCK.
NICE WORK, BOYS. WE'VE GOT THEM ON THE RUN.

IN THE EXCITEMENT THEY HAD ALL FORGOTTEN ONE THING. ALL EXCEPT CORPORAL REGAN.
WHAT ARE YOU YELLING ABOUT, O'HARA? WE'RE BOTTLED UP IN HERE. IF WE LICK THIS LOT, THERE'S A WHOLE COLUMN OF 'EM BEHIND.

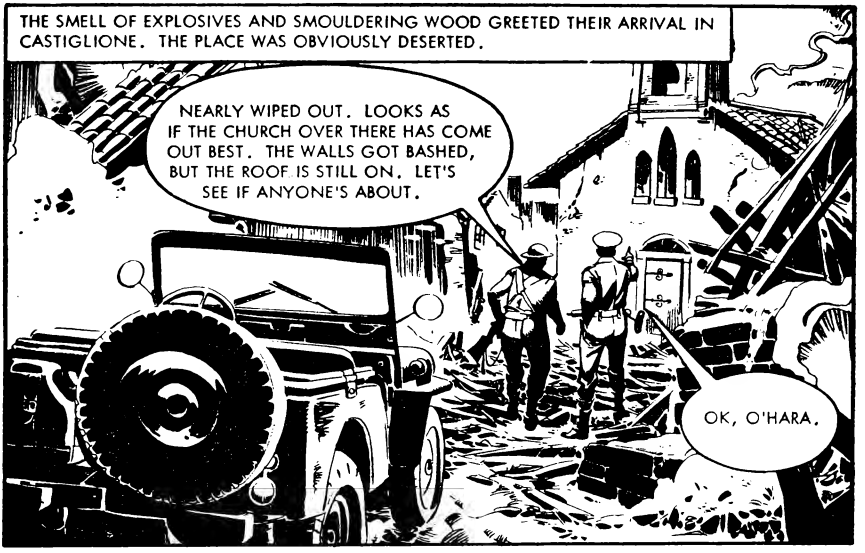
O'HARA NEARLY EXPLODED. TRUST REGAN TO THROW A SPANNER IN THE WORKS.
OH, PIPE DOWN. HERE, TRY THAT FOR SIZE.

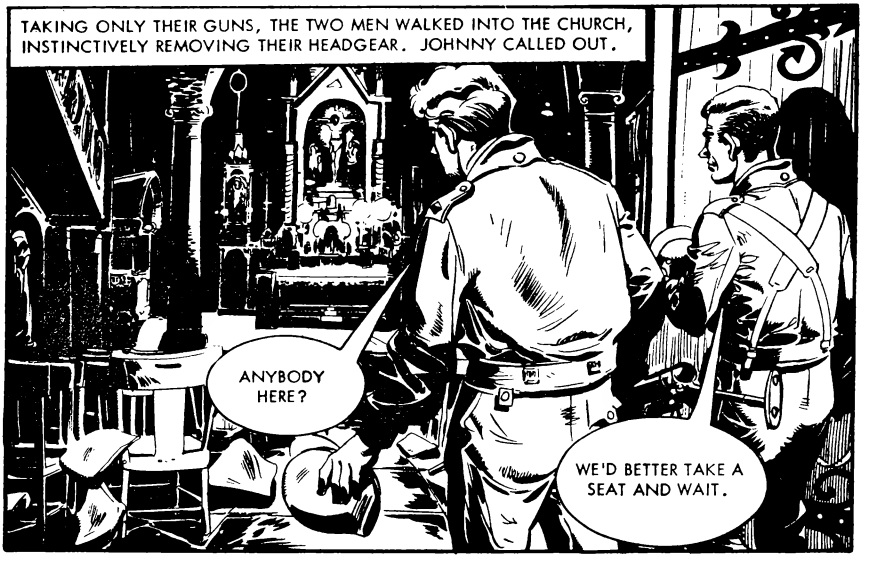
LIEUTENANT SCHMIDT WAS THINKING FAST. THE BRITISH WERE IN A STRONG POSITION. HE HAD LOST A HALF-TRACK, AND THE BAZOOKA COULD GET HIS TRUCK ANY MOMENT NOW. THE MAIN COLUMN WOULD BE ON ITS WAY OUT. HE COULD NOT AFFORD TO WAIT.
ACHTUNG! PREPARE TO WITHDRAW. I SHALL REPORT THAT WE FINISHED OFF THE ENEMY. AND MAY THE ANGELS HELP THE MAN WHO SAYS ANYTHING DIFFERENT. UNDERSTOOD?
JA, WE UNDERSTAND. LET US GO.
JOHNNY RELAXED. THE IMMEDIATE DANGER WAS OVER AND IT LOOKED THIS TIME AS IF HE HAD BEEN LUCKY.
GOOD, THEY'VE PULLED OUT. WHAT'S THE MATTER WITH YOU, CORPORAL?
THAT MAN STRUCK ME. ALL BECAUSE I SAID WE WERE IN THE SOUP. HOW ARE WE GOING TO GET OUT OF HERE, ANYWAY?


THE TRUTH OF THEIR SITUATION SUDDENLY HIT JOHNNY AND HE GAZED AROUND, HORRIFIED. BUT THEN PADDY O'HARA CHIPPED IN.
LOOK, THERE'S A CAVE UP THERE. IF THE REST TOOK COVER IN IT, YOU AND I COULD GO AND BRING HELP IN THE MORNING, SIR.
YES, THAT SOUNDS SENSIBLE O'HARA. HOW ABOUT IT, SERGEANT THOMAS?
OK WITH ME,SIR. I COULD DO WITH A REST.

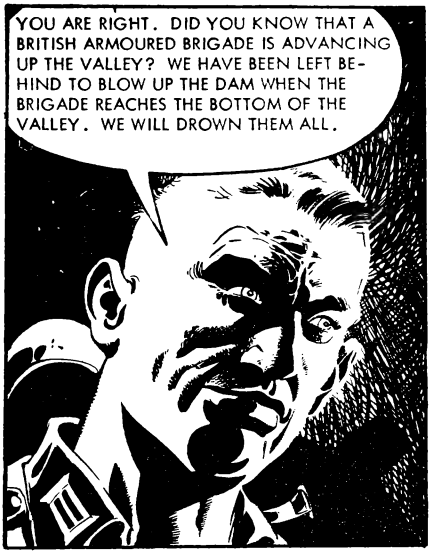

NEXT MORNING, JOHNNY AND O'HARA SET OFF ON THEIR OWN, NOT KNOWING WHETHER OR NOT ENEMY FORCES WERE WAITING, READY TO POUNCE.
THIS IS WHERE WE SPOTTED THAT COLUMN, SIR. NO SIGN OF 'EM NOW. THEY MUST HAVE CARRIED ON.
MUST HAVE DONE. WE'LL GET ON THAT HIGHER ROAD AND HAVE A LOOK-SEE. THEY MAY HAVE BEEN RETREATING FROM OUR FORCES.

THEY BEGAN TO CLIMB. HAD THEY KNOWN IT, THEY WERE HEADING FOR THE BOMBED-OUT VILLAGE OF CASTIGLIONE ABOVE THE MONTONE DAM.
IT'S A NASY TWISTING SORT OF A ROAD. I WOULDN'T LIKE TO COME DOWN HERE IN A HURRY.
KEEP YOUR EYES PEELED. WE DON'T KNOW WHAT'S BEHIND THE NEXT BEND.
THEN THEY SAW THE DAM.
A DAM. I THINK I KNOW WHERE WE ARE. THE ONLY BIG DAM IN THESE PARTS IS ON THE MONTONE RIVER. WE CERTAINLY ARE IN DANGEROUS COUNTRY, O'HARA.
THAT'S NOTHING FRESH, SIR. LOOK BEYOND THE DAM. THAT VILLAGE IS STILL SMOULDERING. DIDN'T WE SEE IT BEING BOMBED?


THE SMELL OF EXPLOSIVES AND SMOULDERING WOOD GREETED THEIR ARRIVAL IN CASTIGLIONE. THE PLACE WAS OBVIOUSLY DESERTED.
NEARLY WIPED OUT. LOOKS AS IF THE CHURCH OVER THERE HAS COME OUT BEST. THE WALLS GOT BASHED, BUT THE ROOF IS STILL ON. LET'S SEE IF ANYONE'S ABOUT.
OK, O'HARA.


TAKING ONLY THEIR GUNS, THE TWO MEN WALKED INTO THE CHURCH, INSTINCTIVELY REMOVING THEIR HEADGEAR. JOHNNY CALLED OUT.
ANYBODY HERE?
WE'D BETTER TAKE A SEAT AND WAIT.

THEY WERE ABOUT TO SETTLE DOWN WHEN THE HARSH CHATTER OF AN AUTOMATIC WEAPON BROUGHT THEIR HEARTS TO THEIR MOUTHS.
ACHTUNG! DO NOT MOVE. DO NOT GO FOR YOUR GUNS.
WHAT IN THE NAME OF THE SAINTS GOES ON?
FELDWEBEL HORST AND PRIVATE GROCK OF THE GERMAN ENGINEERS LOOKED DOWN AT THEIR UNEXPECTED VISITORS.
DO NOT WORRY. I SPEAK ENGLISH. WHERE DID YOU COME FROM? ARE THERE ANY MORE WITH YOU? SPEAK FAST.
WE ARE ON OUR OWN. WHO ARE YOU? I THOUGHT THE GERMANS HAD PULLED OUT.


YOU ARE RIGHT. DID YOU KNOW THAT A BRITISH ARMOURED BRIGADE IS ADVANCING UP THE VALLEY? WE HAVE BEEN LEFT BEHIND TO BLOW UP THE DAM WHEN THE BRIGADE REACHES THE BOTTOM OF THE VALLEY. WE WILL DROWN THEM ALL.

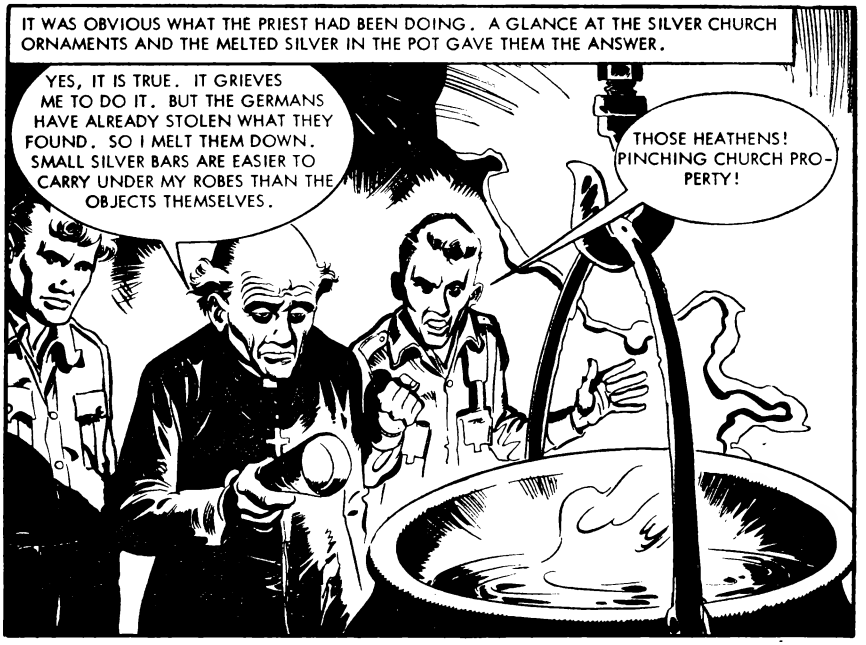
GET ROPE FROM OUR TRUCK, GROCK, AND TIE THEM UP. THESE I WILL TAKE AS SOUVENIRS.

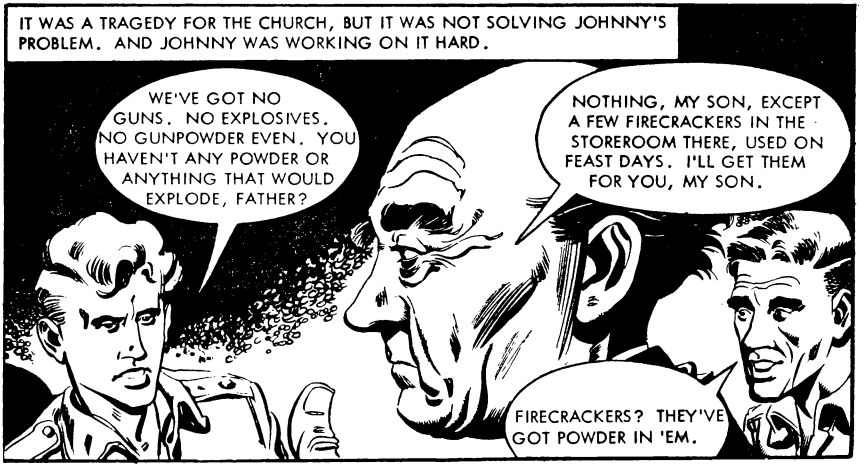
IT LOOKED AS IF JOHNNY'S BAD LUCK WAS WORKING AGAIN. THEY HAD WALKED STRAIGHT INTO TROUBLE.
NOW SIT HERE AND KEEP QUIET. WE MUST GO TO THE DAM AND MAKE SURE ALL IS READY.

THEY HEARD THE GERMAN TRUCK DRIVE AWAY.
WELL, WE WALKED STRAIGHT INTO THAT ONE, SIR.
I'LL SAY WE DID. NOW THEY'LL BLOW THAT DAM AND DROWN THE WHOLE BRIGADE.
NOT ONLY THE BRIGADE EITHER. THEY'LL GET OUR BLOKES SITTING IN THE CAVE AT THE BOTTOM OF THE GORGE.
GOOD GRIEF, YOU'RE RIGHT. THEY'LL DROWN LIKE RATS IN A TRAP.
THEY SAT SILENT, THINKING OF THE MEN WAITING TO BE SAVED — AND THE FATE WHICH WOULD OVERTAKE THEM. THEN SUDDENLY IN THE DARKNESS OF THE CHURCH A SLIVER OF LIGHT COULD BE SEEN.
MISTER DAWSON! DO YOU SEE WHAT I SEE? LOOK AT THAT FLAGSTONE. THERE'S A LIGHT COMING UP AT THE SIDE OF IT.

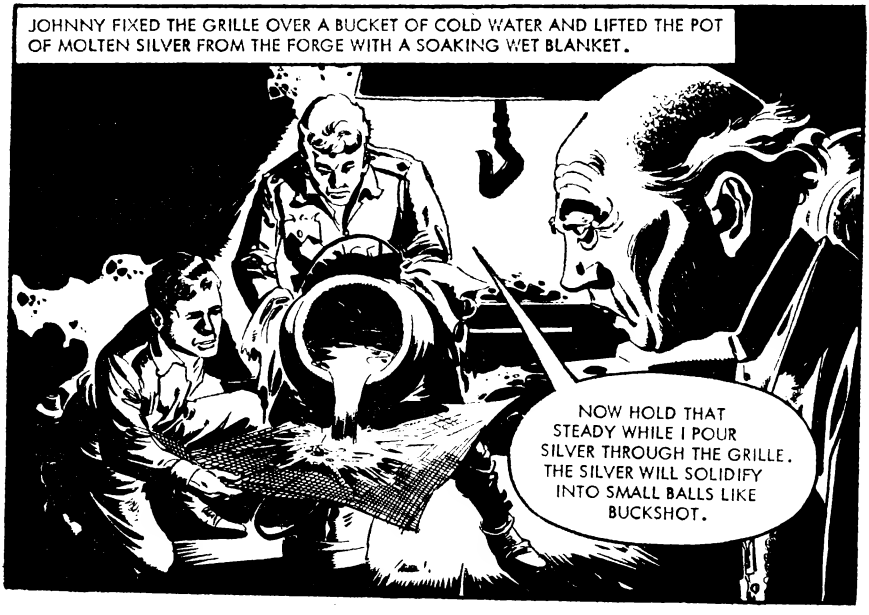
THEY INCHED THEIR WAY ACROSS THE FLOOR UNTIL THEY WERE AT THE FLAGSTONE. THEY BATTERED ON IT WITH THEIR HEELS. AFTER A PAUSE, THE STONE BEGAN TO RISE.
WHO IS THERE? GERMAN OR ENGLISH?
ENGLISH. WE NEED HELP, FATHER. PLEASE UNTIE THESE BONDS.

FATHER ROSSINI, THE PARISH PRIEST, QUICKLY RELEASED THEM AND THEY FOLLOWED HIM DOWN INTO THE CELLAR.
THANK YOU, FATHER. WHAT ARE YOU DOING DOWN HERE?
AH, YOU MAY WELL ASK, MY SON. THESE ARE VERY TROUBLED TIMES FOR THE CHURCH, FOR ALL MANKIND.


IT WAS OBVIOUS WHAT THE PRIEST HAD BEEN DOING. A GLANCE AT THE SILVER CHURCH ORNAMENTS AND THE MELTED SILVER IN THE POT GAVE THEM THE ANSWER.
YES, IT IS TRUE. IT GRIEVES ME TO DO IT. BUT THE GERMANS HAVE ALREADY STOLEN WHAT THEY FOUND. SO I MELT THEM DOWN. SMALL SILVER BARS ARE EASIER TO CARRY UNDER MY ROBES THAN THE OBJECTS THEMSELVES.
THOSE HEATHENS! PINCHING CHURCH PROPERTY!

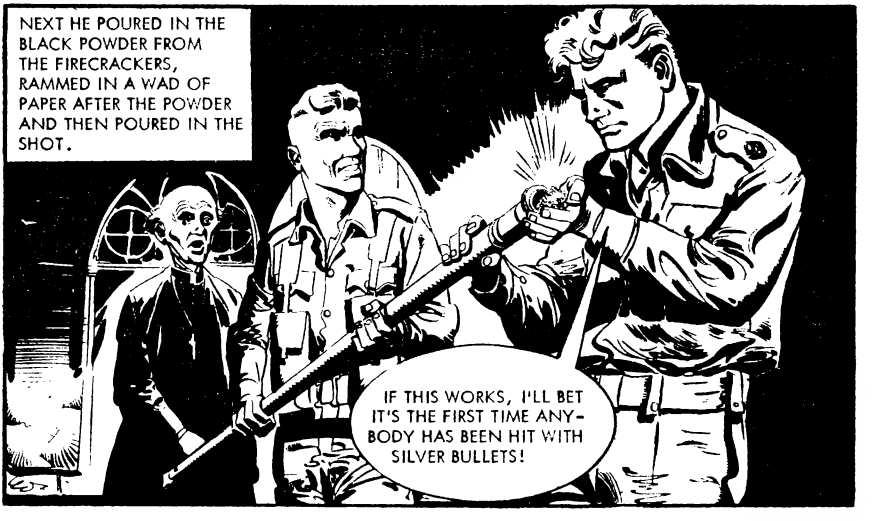

IT WAS A TRAGEDY FOR THE CHURCH, BUT IT WAS NOT SOLVING JOHNNY'S PROBLEM. AND JOHNNY WAS WORKING ON IT HARD.
WE'VE GOT NO GUNS. NO EXPLOSIVES. NO GUNPOWDER EVEN. YOU HAVEN'T ANY POWDER OR ANYTHING THAT WOULD EXPLODE, FATHER?
NOTHING, MY SON, EXCEPT A FEW FIRECRACKERS IN THE STOREROOM THERE, USED ON FEAST DAYS. I'LL GET THEM FOR YOU, MY SON.
FIRECRACKERS? THEY'VE GOT POWDER IN 'EM.

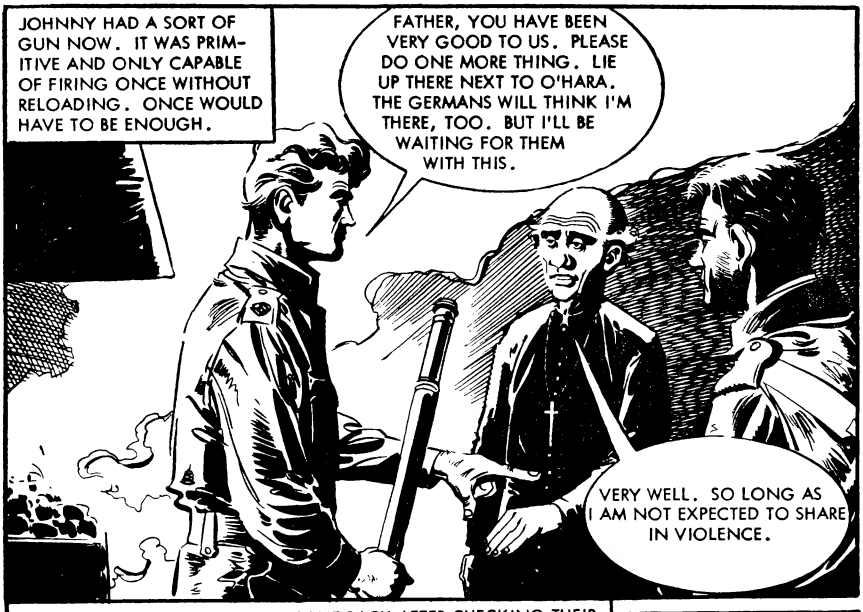
THE PRIEST BROUGHT A BUNDLE FROM THE STOREROOM.
YES, THIS IS THE STUFF ALL RIGHT. BUT WHAT ARE WE GOING TO USE FOR A GUN OR BULLETS?
I'LL SHOW YOU. GET ME THAT WIRE GRILLE FROM THE WINDOW.


JOHNNY FIXED THE GRILLE OVER A BUCKET OF COLD WATER AND LIFTED THE POT OF MOLTEN SILVER FROM THE FORGE WITH A SOAKING WET BLANKET.
NOW HOLD THAT STEADY WHILE I POUR SILVER THROUGH THE GRILLE. THE SILVER WILL SOLIDIFY INTO SMALL BALLS LIKE BUCKSHOT.

WHEN THE BOTTOM OF THE BUCKET WAS COVERED BY SMALL SILVER BALLS —
NOW WE NEED SOMETHING TO DISCHARGE THEM WITH. FATHER, HAVE I YOUR PERMISSION TO USE THIS HOLLOW STAFF?
AS YOU WISH, MY SON.

WITH THE CROSS REMOVED, JOHNNY BATTERED ONE END OF THE STAFF, SEALING IT OFF. THEN HE DROVE A NAIL THROUGH IT, NEAR TO THE CLOSED END.
THIS WILL MAKE A TOUCH-HOLE. THIS IS GOING TO MAKE A SHOTGUN — I HOPE!


NEXT HE POURED IN THE BLACK POWDER FROM THE FIRECRACKERS, RAMMED IN A WAD OF PAPER AFTER THE POWDER AND THEN POURED IN THE SHOT.
IF THIS WORKS, I'LL BET IT'S THE FIRST TIME ANYBODY HAS BEEN HIT WITH SILVER BULLETS!


JOHNNY HAD A SORT OF GUN NOW. IT WAS PRIMITIVE AND ONLY CAPABLE OF FIRING ONCE WITHOUT RELOADING. ONCE WOULD HAVE TO BE ENOUGH.
FATHER, YOU HAVE BEEN VERY GOOD TO US. PLEASE DO ONE MORE THING. LIE UP THERE NEXT TO O'HARA. THE GERMANS WILL THINK I'M THERE, TOO. BUT I'LL BE WAITING FOR THEM WITH THIS.
VERY WELL. SO LONG AS I AM NOT EXPECTED TO SHARE IN VIOLENCE.

FELDWEBEL HORST AND GROCK CAME BACK AFTER CHECKING THEIR WORK ON THE DAM, NOT KNOWING THEY WERE WALKING INTO A TRAP.
SO, OUR GUESTS ARE STILL WITH US. AND, I TRUST, COMFORTABLE. BUT WE CAN USE THEIR BEDS. WAKE THEM UP.

IN THE DARKNESS, BENEATH THE BALCONY, JOHNNY HAD SET UP HIS IMPROVISED GUN ON TWO CHAIRS. CUPPED IN HIS HAND, HE HELD A PIECE OF SMOULDERING CORD.
MOVE, I SAID. YOU CAN REST ON THE COLD SLABS.
JOHNNY QUICKLY APPLIED THE BURNING END OF THE CORD TO THE BLACK POWDER IN THE TOUCH HOLE, AND THE 'GUN' FIRED.
AAAGH!

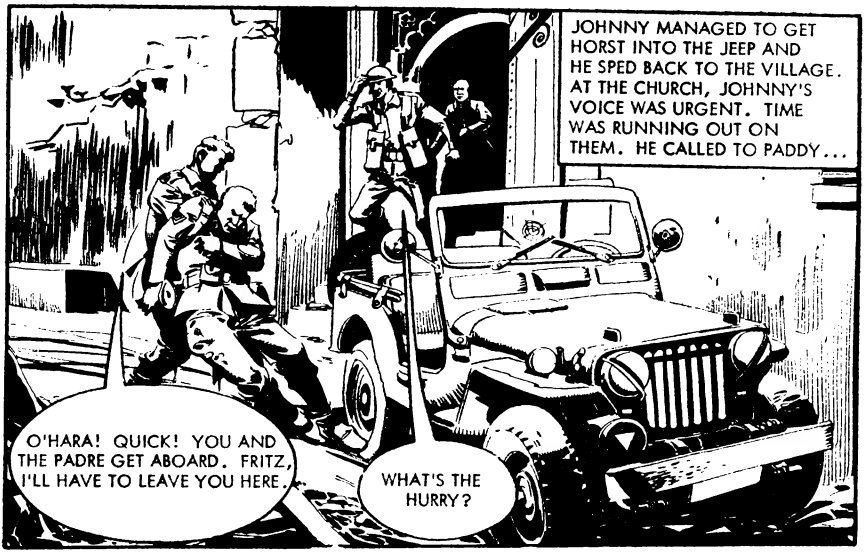
JOHNNY FOLLOWED UP LIKE A WHIRLWIND, GOING FOR THE GUN THAT GROCK HAD DROPPED.
RIGHT, PADDY, UP YOU GET!
OK, WATCH THE SERGEANT!
THE GERMAN SERGEANT SEEMED TO RECOVER HIS SENSES AS HE REACHED THE DOOR. HIS SCHMEISSER BLASTED OUT WILDLY.
TAKE COVER! I'LL GET HIM!

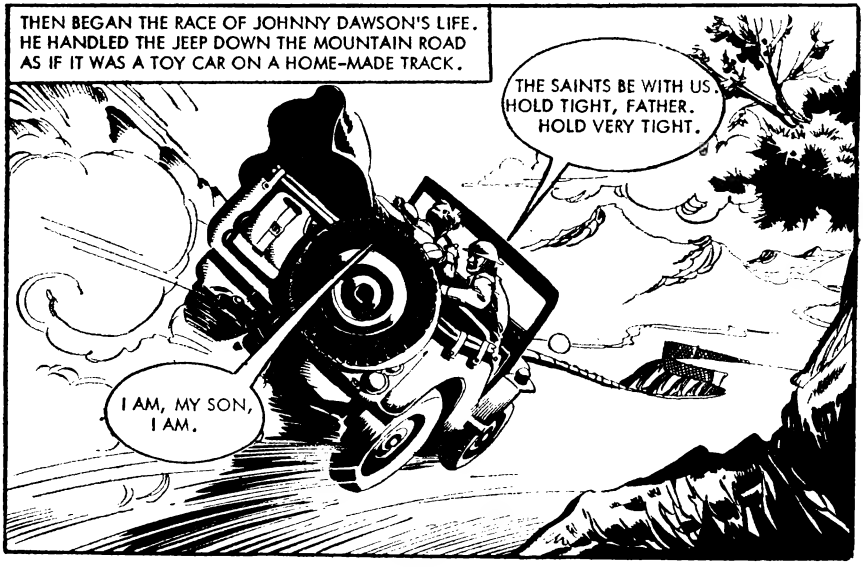
AFTER THE BURST OF FIRING HORST RAN OUTSIDE. JOHNNY HEARD THE TRUCK ROAR INTO LIFE.
HE'S GOING TO BLOW UP THE DAM. TAKE CARE OF THIS CHAP — I'LL GO AFTER HIM.

THE GERMAN TRUCK WAS ALREADY RACING AWAY WHEN JOHNNY REACHED THE ROAD.
DARN IT. HE'S GOT AWAY WITH IT.

LEAPING INTO THE JEEP, JOHNNY RACED AFTER THE SPEEDING GERMAN TRUCK ALONGSIDE OF THE DAM.
THE BRIGADE WON'T BE IN THE VALLEY YET, SO THE WATER WON'T HIT THEM, EVEN THOUGH THE ADVANCE WILL BE HALTED...BUT THERE'S MY MEN — SIX OF THEM — GOING TO DIE HELPLESSLY!
HORST LEAPT OUT OF THE CAB AND BEGAN TO RUN TOWARDS ONE OF THE VALVE CHAMBERS IN THE CENTRE OF THE DAM WALL.
HALT! STOP, OR I'LL FIRE.

THE RANGE WAS LONG FOR A MACHINE-PISTOL, BUT ONE OF THE FLYING BULLETS GOT HORST JUST BEFORE HE MANAGED TO REACH THE VALVE CHAMBER.
AAARGH!
YET THE GERMAN MANAGED TO CRAWL INSIDE THE VALVE ROOM. HE WAS OUT AGAIN BY THE TIME JOHNNY DAWSON GOT THERE.
YOU ARE TOO LATE, ENGLISHMAN. IN FIFTEEN MINUTES, THIS DAM WALL WILL CRACK UNDER THE EXPLOSION.
THE EXPLOSIVES WERE PLACED WELL DOWN THE DAM WALL. BY THE TIME JOHNNY REACHED THE SPLUTTERING FUSE, IT HAD BURNED DOWN OUT OF HIS REACH.
YOU WON THAT ROUND, FRITZ. IF THIS LOT IS GOING UP, I'D BETTER GET YOU OUT OF IT. COME ON, I'VE NOT GOT MUCH TIME.


JOHNNY MANAGED TO GET HORST INTO THE JEEP AND HE SPED BACK TO THE VILLAGE. AT THE CHURCH, JOHNNY'S VOICE WAS URGENT. TIME WAS RUNNING OUT ON THEM. HE CALLED TO PADDY...
O'HARA! QUICK! YOU AND THE PADRE GET ABOARD. FRITZ, I'LL HAVE TO LEAVE YOU HERE.
WHAT'S THE HURRY?


THEN BEGAN THE RACE OF JOHNNY DAWSON'S LIFE. HE HANDLED THE JEEP DOWN THE MOUNTAIN ROAD AS IF IT WAS A TOY CAR ON A HOME-MADE TRACK.
THE SAINTS BE WITH US. HOLD TIGHT, FATHER. HOLD VERY TIGHT.
I AM, MY SON, I AM.

ONLY STEEL WRISTS COULD HAVE WRENCHED THE POWERFUL VEHICLE ROUND THE HAIRPIN BENDS.
MR DAWSON — REMEMBER THE GREMLINS!
STILL THE MINUTES WERE TICKING BY. PRECIOUS MINUTES.
HOLD TIGHT! I'M CUTTING THIS CORNER!
LANDING SAFELY, THEY HAD REACHED SEVENTY MILES PER HOUR UP THE FLAT VALLEY WHEN THE DAM FINALLY EXPLODED.

JOHNNY HAD HEARD THE BLAST OF THE EXPLOSION AND KNEW TOO WELL WHAT IT MEANT. YET HE DIDN'T HESITATE.
SERGEANT THOMAS! ALL OUT AT THE DOUBLE. GET 'EM ON TO THE JEEP. THIS VALLEY WILL BE UNDER WATER IN SECONDS NOW.
SOMEWHERE, BENEATH THAT HEAP OF MEN, WAS AN ITALIAN PRIEST. FEW REALISED HE WAS THERE.
GO IT, SIR. WE'LL MAKE IT TO HIGHER GROUND.
CORPORAL REGAN, YOU CAN THANK THE LUCK OF THE DAWSONS FOR YOUR LIFE!

PADDY O'HARA TOOK THE SILVER HORSESHOE FROM HIS POCKET AND RUBBED IT GENTLY.
AND THAT WAS HOW HE SAVED US. THE LUCK OF THE DAWSONS NEVER LEFT HIM AFTER THAT. JOHNNY GOT HIS CAPTAINCY AND AN M.C. BEFORE THE END OF THE WAR. THIS HORSESHOE? THE ITALIAN PRIEST GAVE HIM THE SILVER BUCKSHOT LATER ON. HE HAD IT MADE INTO THIS. YOU KNOW, I AIN'T SUPERSTITIOUS — BUT I'D HATE TO LOSE IT!
Commando
THE END

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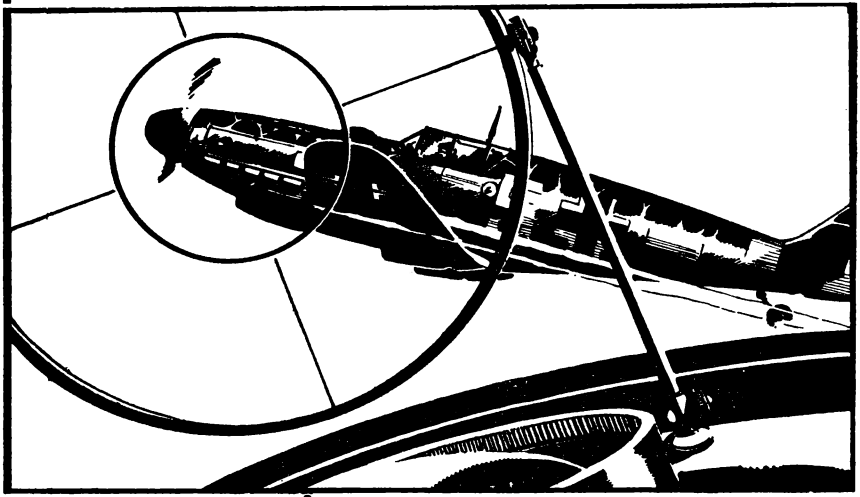

That's **Commando!**

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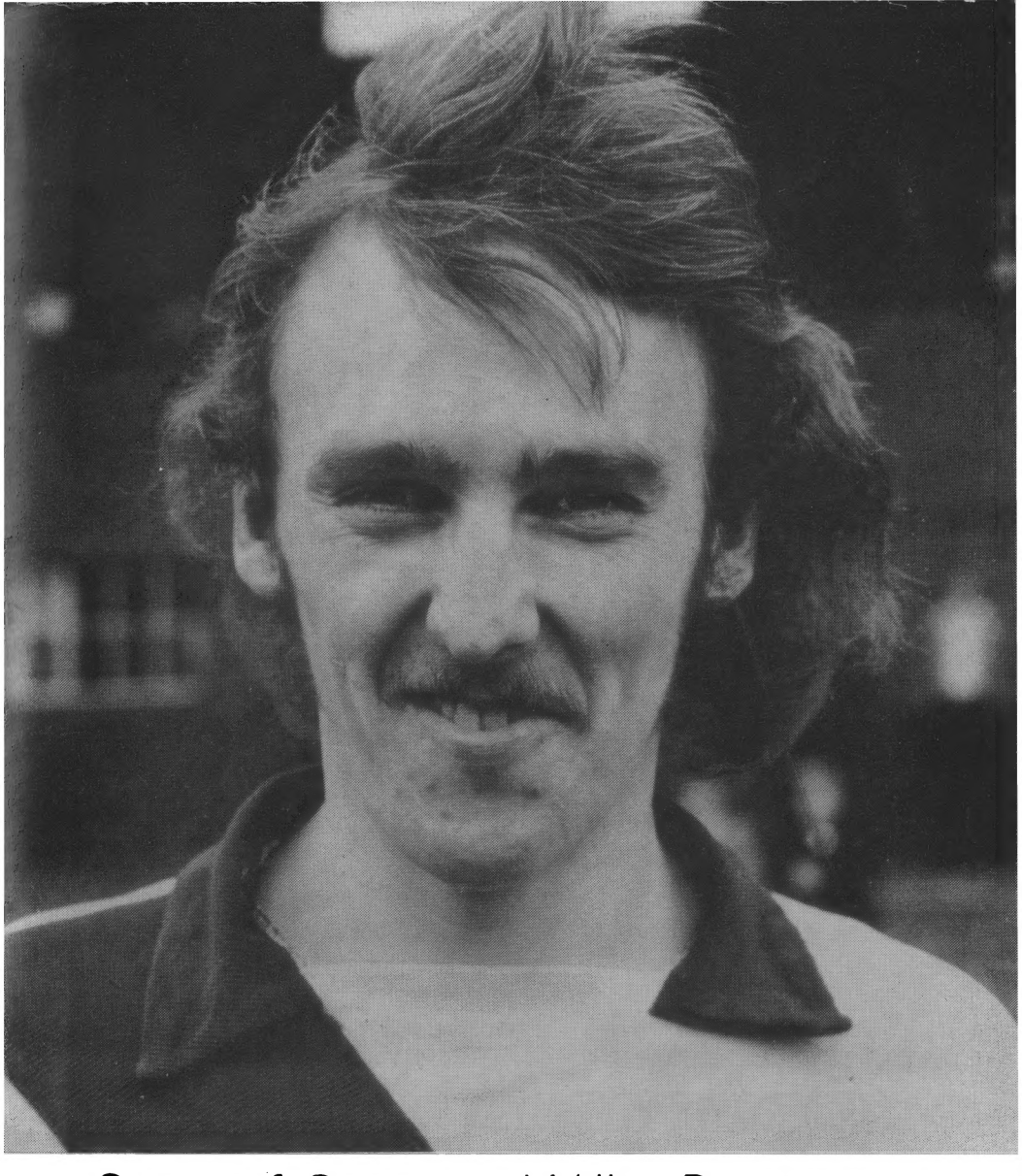

Stars of Soccer—Willie Pettigrew

JOHNNY THE JINX

GREMLINS, leprechauns — call them what you like — they all had it in for Lieutenant Johnny Dawson. He was the sort of bloke whose Sten would suddenly jam for no reason, or he'd be the one in a million who'd be issued with a grenade with a faulty fuse.

Yes, Johnny had a real JINX. He didn't like it, the top brass didn't like it, and, most important, Johnny's men didn't like it. In fact if his luck didn't change soon he'd have a mutiny on his hands.

Commando